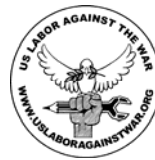


U.S. LABOR AGAINST THE WAR



Fact Sheet Congress Can Cut Off Funding for the Iraq War

Members of Congress will soon be faced with a choice: to vote for or against \$100-160 billion more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite the will of the people, Bush has made it clear that he will keep the war going until he leaves office. Congress can make this impossible by stopping the funding that makes the war possible. If we want the United States to withdraw from Iraq before President Bush leaves office, Congress has to vote to cut off all funds that sustain military operations there.

Will it put our troops in harm's way if we cut off funds?

Once the decision to leave is made, U.S. troops should not be sent on military missions inside Iraq that put them at risk. They can be withdrawn to safe compounds outside the cities while they wait for evacuation. Iraqis will have no reason to attack them.

Won't we be abandoning our troops if we stop funding the war while they're still in Iraq?

There is more than enough money already in the pipeline for a safe withdrawal of our troops. Congress can always appropriate more if it is needed to be used only for withdrawal.

What funds are in the pipeline?

Congress voted an additional \$70 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan in September 2006 to keep paying for war until more money could be voted on this spring.

Can that money be used to bring the troops home? Since the \$70 billion is already earmarked, can Congress change how that money is spent?

Some of these funds have already been spent, most have not. Congress could direct that this money be spent only on withdrawing our troops and closing the military bases. It's a question of members of Congress having the political will to do what's right.

As Commander-in-Chief, doesn't the president have sole power to commit our troops to battle? Isn't it up to him when they are withdrawn?

No, while the president can send troops to battle, it is Congress that must authorize the use

of troops in a war. Congress can also withdraw its consent. Congress controls the national purse. It must grant the funds to pay for military actions

How can Congress force Bush to end the war?

The *only* option Congress has to guide the conduct of the war is to withdraw approval for the war through a cut off of funds. It must cut all the funds that make the war possible.

Why are funds for the Iraq War not part of the regular budget? Why are they handled as "supplemental" appropriations?

By taking funding for the war "off the books," Bush tries to cover up the true economic impact of the war because it won't show up in the regular national budget. And emergency spending like this does not get the same level of Congressional scrutiny and debate that the budget bill does.

When will the vote come up this spring? How will we know when it will be debated and voted on by Congress?

The "supplemental" will be introduced along with the president's budget on February 5.

Representative John Murtha (D-PA), as head of the Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations, says he will hold a month of hearings on it. Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Senator Harry Reid will decide when the bill reaches the floor, which will most likely be in March. That's why it is crucial that we put pressure on our members of Congress now. We want them to reject any request for more funds and to cut off all funding for the military occupation of Iraq.

Was this strategy successfully used to end the war in Vietnam?

Yes. On April 10, 1975, President Gerald Ford requested an additional \$1 billion for the War in Vietnam. Congress refused. Twenty days later, U.S. Marines evacuated the U.S. embassy in Saigon. All U.S. troops left Vietnam.

54,000 US dead, American troops refusing to fight, massive, growing protest at home and the resistance of the Vietnamese people were all factors in ending the war. But Congress refusing to pay for the war finally tipped the balance.

What kind of record do members of Congress who are in the Out of Iraq, Progressive and/or Congressional Black Caucus have with regard to past votes on funding the war?

While some have consistently voted against each of the previous eight funding bills, many others have voted for one or more of them. Their reasoning has been that as long as troops are in the field, we must “continue to support them.” This creates a vicious cycle, and the reasoning is false. Bringing the troops home and out of harm’s way is the best way to support them.

Why is a vote for supplemental funding a vote to continue the war?

If Congress authorizes another \$100-160 billion, the administration will have enough resources to continue the war for the rest of Bush’s term. The number of injured and dead U.S. troops and Iraqis will continue to climb. If a Democratically controlled Congress approves these funds, the Democrats can no longer claim this is “Bush’s war” or a “GOP war.” The Democrats will own it, and whoever runs for president on their ticket will have to carry that burden into the election campaign.

Congress can debate and pass legislation for redeployment, phased redeployment, or an “over the horizon” presence. They can vote for a resolution to end the war and a resolution to bring the troops home. But as long as the money flows, these will just be symbolic measures and the war will continue.

How is a vote for more funding a vote to increase the national debt and limit spending on social programs?

Each and every vote to fund the war is a vote to drive the United States deeper into debt. Bush inherited a shrinking government and debt in 2001. The last year President Clinton was in office, the nation borrowed \$18 billion. The first year Bush was in office, he had to borrow \$270 billion to pay for the massive tax cut that he gave, mostly to the wealthiest Americans.

When Bush became president in 2001, the United States’ public debt was \$5.8 trillion. **Today the public debt is \$8.3 trillion.** Of this amount, \$2.2 trillion is held by foreign governments and banks. In 2005 the U.S. government paid \$325 billion in interest on this debt.

This huge and growing debt has been used politically to attack social programs that serve human needs. They say we can no longer afford these “luxuries.” But they claim tax cuts for the rich are an economic “necessity.”

What’s the total amount spent so far on the war in Iraq?

It’s about \$150,000 every minute! The monthly cost of the war has increased from \$4.4 billion to \$7.1 billion since 2003. According to the National Priorities Project, we have already spent \$358.3 billion. That cost does not factor in caring for injured troops, many for the rest of their lives. A Nobel Prize winning economist estimated that the real cost, just through 2006, was \$1.2 trillion.

But the value of the lives of more than 3000 U.S. troops, hundreds of contractors, and many hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have died as a result of the war cannot be measured in dollars.

