

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted for the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, which would provide our troops with the equipment they need, require Iraqis to take control of their own country, establish benchmarks for withdrawal from Iraq, help fight the war on terror in Afghanistan, as well as provide \$2.8 billion for veterans' and troops' health care. The bill passed the House this afternoon.

Arcuri's remarks in support of the bill, as prepared for delivery, are attached below:

**The Honorable Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)  
In the House of Representatives  
U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act  
Floor Statement  
March 22, 2007**

I thank the distinguished Chairwoman of the Rules Committee for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, for months, I've said that our country needs a plan to ensure the timely redeployment of our troops out of Iraq. The previous Congress failed in their duty to provide oversight and refused to ask the tough questions regarding the management of this poorly-planned and ill-conceived war.

To say, as some of my Republican colleagues have, that passage of this legislation would somehow embolden our enemies or send the wrong message to our allies is a blatant distortion of the facts.

The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act lays out -- for the first time -- a responsible and realistic strategy for completing our mission in Iraq and bringing our brave troops home as soon as possible. This is a responsible and deliberate plan to change the direction in Iraq without jeopardizing the safety and wellbeing of our soldiers.

The legislation sets a responsible timeline for a phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq, with a date certain, by August 2008 at the latest.

The war in Iraq increasingly strains our military –creating a crisis in U.S. troop readiness and decreasing our ability to respond to new threats. With more than 3,200 troops dead, more than 24,000 troops wounded, and more than \$400 billion of taxpayer dollars spent – we have paid too high a price.

We have a choice: we can continue the President's open ended commitment to a civil war in Iraq or we can finish the job and begin a responsible redeployment of U.S. forces.

The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act goes beyond a new direction for Iraq – it begins a new direction for our country, one in which veterans are taken care of, families provided for, and brave men and women in harm's way have the resources they need to get the job done.

The legislation provides \$1 billion to fight the global war on terror by putting the focus back where it should have been all along - Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden.

The legislation would also provide \$2.5 billion in additional funding to ensure that our troops are properly equipped and trained; \$2.8 billion for Defense Health Care; and \$1.7 Billion for veteran's health care - including millions to address the maintenance backlog at VA health care facilities like Walter Reed - ensuring our veterans and troops get the care they need and deserve.

I am proud to associate myself with this legislation because it will change our direction in Iraq, and provides the new direction for our country that the American people demanded last November.

My constituents did not send me to Washington to serve as a rubber stamp for the

Administration. I was sent to Washington to stand up against the mismanagement of this war and misplaced priorities of the Administration.

True victory will be achieved when we bring all of our brave troops home -- alive and uninjured. I would ask that if my children were serving in Iraq, and we as a nation should ask nothing less for our brave troops.

Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time.

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