

Statement on H.R. 3087 -- October 2, 2007

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3087, legislation requiring the Administration to work closely with Congress and our military leaders in communicating a comprehensive post-surge strategy in Iraq.

Since 2003, over 3,800 American military personnel have been killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom and more than 27,000 have been injured. These are very difficult times and it is our duty to do everything possible to support those who have risked so much in service to their nation.

To this point, however, the U.S. Congress has been consumed by partisan in-fighting - which has resulted in gridlock and has prevented debate on substantive proposals for achieving stability and bringing our troops home.

The American people deserve a straightforward understanding of our involvement and long-term objectives in the Middle East. The legislation before us today, of which I am a proud cosponsor, takes an important step forward by requiring the Secretary of Defense to submit regular reports to Congress regarding the status of post-surge planning.

Clearly, the U.S. Congress should not be acting without considering the advice of our military commanders in Iraq and this legislation will ensure that Secretary Gates, General Petraeus, and other senior officials are capable of effectively communicating developments with Members of Congress and the Administration.

This information will also provide a greater understanding of progress made on General Petraeus' proposal for the redeployment of U.S. troops and it will assist Congress in budgeting for the possible missions that may continue in Iraq - such as efforts to disrupt terrorist organizations and train Iraqi security forces.

H.R. 3087 is the first of what I hope will be a substantive, bipartisan effort in Congress to work with our military and foreign policy leaders to achieve stability in Iraq and bring our soldiers home to their families.

Last week, 14 Democrats and 14 Republicans endorsed such an approach by signing the Bipartisan Compact on Iraq Debate. Like Mr. Tanner's proposal, the importance of developing a clearly defined and measurable mission in Iraq is one of eight central principles agreed to in the Bipartisan Compact.

I am hopeful that by finally agreeing to consider H.R. 3087, Members from both parties have signaled a willingness to set-aside the partisan tactics that have crippled our efforts over the last several months.

Mr. Speaker, the Iraq war provokes intense and genuine feelings from individuals at all points of the political spectrum - however "politics as usual" in Washington, DC should not be allowed to consume our efforts at the forsake of progress.

Bridging this critical political divide in Washington is our only hope for transitioning responsibility to the Iraqi government and bringing about real substantive change in Iraq.