

An Analysis of & Talking Points on the 2005 Supplemental Spending Bill

by Jeff Leys
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President George W. Bush's \$82bn supplemental spending request appeared set for easy approval by Congress, as Democrats on Tuesday pledged to support the measure in spite of complaints about faulty estimates of war costs and lax oversight of Pentagon spending.

"Democrats are hopeful we are successful" in Iraq and Afghanistan, said Steny Hoyer, House Democratic whip, explaining his plan to support Mr Bush's request for extra funding.

"This administration has been extraordinarily wrong" in its cost estimates, he said, but the money proposed as an addition to the annual budget was needed to help stabilise and develop Iraq. The supplemental funds are to be used to cover the costs of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as tsunami relief and some homeland security, intelligence and foreign operations programmes. (Financial Times)

The following can be used for talking points or as a sample letter to U.S. Senators and Congressional Representatives. Please contact your Senators and Congressional Representatives and urge them to vote against endless war.

I urge you to vote against the Supplemental Spending bill submitted by President Bush on February 14, 2005 for the following reasons:

A Vote Against the Supplemental Does Not Endanger US Troops in Iraq.

The argument may well be made that a vote against the supplemental spending bill will leave U.S. troops in Iraq without necessary supplies. Indeed this seems to be the familiar refrain from lawmakers.

But this is most assuredly NOT the case.

A vote against the supplemental spending bill does not prohibit the Pentagon from paying for military operations in Iraq. It would, however, require the Pentagon to shift funds from other programs if indeed the U.S. intends to continue the occupation of Iraq.

It cannot plausibly be argued that without approval of the supplemental spending bill that U.S. troops in Iraq would suddenly be left without ammunition, equipment, food, medicine and other supplies.

It can be plausibly argued that voting for the supplemental spending bill is simply approving a blank check for the Bush Administration to forever continue the war in Iraq without any form of real, substantive Congressional oversight.

A vote for the supplemental spending bill is not a vote to support the troops. Rather a vote for the supplemental spending bill is a vote to commit to a never ending war and occupation in Iraq.

A Vote for the Supplemental Spending Bill Endorses the Budgetary Schemes Used to Fund the War

President Bush has not been honest with the people of the United States nor with Congress concerning the true costs of the war in and occupation of Iraq. This supplemental spending bill is for Fiscal Year 2005, which is already almost 5 months old. Funding for Fiscal Year 2005 should have been included in the budget submitted last year. Indeed, at the time that the FY 2005 budget was submitted to Congress, the Bush Administration was acknowledging that it would seek further funding for the war in Iraq through a supplemental spending request.

Supplemental spending requests should rightfully be limited to those instances in which the government finds it necessary to allocate funds in an entirely unanticipated situation, such as relief for those affected by the tsunami in Asia. Even the Blue Dog Coalition of moderate to conservative Democrats finds fault with the Bush Administration approach to funding the war in and occupation of Iraq.

A Vote for the Supplemental Spending Bill Endorses the War in and Occupation of Iraq

As noted above, voting against the supplemental spending bill DOES NOT endanger U.S. service people in Iraq. Indeed voting for the supplemental spending bill ensures that U.S. service people will continue to be at risk in Iraq.

The Bush Administration has not developed any mechanism or timetable for ending the occupation of Iraq. Indeed indications are that the Bush Administration intends to maintain a substantial troop presence in Iraq for the next several years.

President Bush has not included funding for the occupation of Iraq in his FY 2006 budget just recently submitted to Congress. You can fully anticipate that he will return to Congress sometime within the next year to request a supplemental spending bill to cover the costs of the war in Iraq for FY 2006.

If the logic is that a vote against a supplemental spending bill represents a vote to place U.S. service people in danger, you will be compelled to vote for a supplemental spending bill for FY 2006, FY 2007, and FY 2008-at a minimum.

The only way to ensure that U.S. service people are removed from harm's way in Iraq is to vote AGAINST the supplemental spending bill and to demand that a plan for withdrawal of U.S. military personnel from Iraq be immediately implemented.

A Vote for the Supplemental Spending Bill Diverts Necessary Funds from the Common Good in the United States

The cost to the Common Good in the U.S. because of the Iraq war and occupation is high. The funds being diverted to the war in and occupation of Iraq could instead be utilized to fund the Common Good in the United States. Universal health care, fully funded public education at all levels, jobs training programs for employment paying a living wage, public transportation and other programs are being woefully under funded or entirely ignored in the current debate.

As President Eisenhower said:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, represents, in the final analysis, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”

A Vote on Principle

It is absolutely essential that you cast your vote on principle. If you truly support the continued war in and occupation of Iraq, then by all means vote your principle and vote for the war.

But if you opposed the war and continue to oppose the war, you must vote on principle against the supplemental spending bill.

Minnesota Democrats have shown the way of principled opposition in this country. In 2002, Senators Wellstone and Dayton each voted against the war. Senator Wellstone at the time was locked in an extremely tight race for re-election. After Senator Wellstone announced he would vote against the war, he began to widen his lead over his opponent (the current Senator Norm Coleman). Senator Wellstone also knew how to effectively blend his opposition to war with support for Veterans, a key skill which strengthened his work as a Senator representing the people of Minnesota.

Minnesota Democrats are proving that principled opposition works and is successful. Led by House Minority Leader Matt Entenza, Minnesota Democrats took principled stands in opposition to the Republican majority. As a result, in the November 2004 elections Minnesota's Democrats nearly regained control of the House-going from an 81 to 53 Republican majority to a narrow 68 to 66 Republican majority.

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