

For the Bush White House, the real definition of victory has become “anything they can get away with without taking blame for defeat,” said the retired Army Gen. William Odom, a national security official in the Reagan and Carter administrations, when I spoke with him recently. The plan is to run out the Washington clock between now and Jan. 20, 2009, no matter the cost.

Precipitous withdrawal is also a chimera, since American manpower, materiel and bases, not to mention our new Vatican City-sized embassy, can’t be drawn down overnight. The only real choice, as everyone knows, is an orderly plan for withdrawal that will best serve American interests. The real debate must be over what that plan is. That debate can’t happen as long as the White House gets away with falsifying reality, sliming its opponents and sowing hyped fears of Armageddon. The threat that terrorists in civil-war-torn Iraq will follow us home if we leave is as bogus as Saddam’s mushroom clouds. The Qaeda that actually attacked us on 9/11 still remains under the tacit protection of our ally, Pakistan.

As General Odom says, the endgame will start “when a senior senator from the president’s party says no,” much as William Fulbright did to L.B.J. during Vietnam. That’s why in Washington this fall, eyes will turn once again to John Warner, the senior Republican with the clout to give political cover to other members of his party who want to leave Iraq before they’re forced to evacuate Congress. In September, it will be nearly a year since Mr. Warner said that Iraq was “drifting sideways” and that action would have to be taken “if this level of violence is not under control and this government able to function.”

Mr. Warner has also signaled his regret that he was not more outspoken during Vietnam. “We kept surging in those years,” he told The Washington Post in January, as the Iraq surge began. “It didn’t work.” Surely he must recognize that his moment for speaking out about this war is overdue. Without him, the Democrats don’t have the votes to force the president’s hand. With him, it’s a slam dunk. The best way to honor the sixth anniversary of 9/11 will be to at last disarm a president who continues to squander countless lives in the names of those voiceless American dead.

The truth about September will be that the President is still losing the Iraq war, but that’s not what we will be told, nor will the President tell the American people that he has no plan to treat all the gravely wounded soldiers returning from Iraq. Already America has lost over 3,500 soldiers, as many as 53,000 more are gravely wounded. As many as 50,000 more may yet be afflicted with post traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury.

As the Associated Press reported over the weekend, our government is overwhelmed now in trying to care for our wounded, and the President has this Nation on course to see 20,000 more casualties before he leaves office. That’s what will happen unless his own Republican Party finally tells him and the American people the truth about Iraq, and the urgent need to get their soldiers out of harm’s way.

The Vietnam Memorial in Washington is a place where we commemorate the soldiers who died during the last failed war. Had enough people gotten through to the President back in 1968, there would only be one side of

that Memorial because we could have saved at least 25,000 lives. That’s why we have to get through to the President today. The American people can’t, the Democratic Party can’t, even the Iraq Parliament can’t. That leaves our Republican Party to stop the memorial to Iraq’s fallen heroes from growing any larger than it already will be.

We have a chance today to save U.S. lives by seeing the Iraq war for what it is and what it isn’t. It is a civil war created by us, and it isn’t in America’s interest to be there.

Bring the soldiers home, Mr. President.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it’s an honor to address the House, and it’s good to be here before we go on 4th of July break to celebrate the birthday of this great country.

As you know, in the 30-something Working Group, we come to the floor to discuss a number of issues that are facing the American people, and also, I think it’s important to identify our focus on the issues in Iraq and Afghanistan and the issues that are facing the American people.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the events over the weekend in Iraq and also in Afghanistan even give us further focus on making sure that the issues that are facing our men and women that are in harm’s way are addressed here in the Congress. I think it’s also very important for us to focus on what has not happened in this Congress as it relates to making sure that we meet the needs of our men and women.

We have appropriation bills that have been held up in the process that are now moving through the process. It’s not because of the majority side’s lack of will to be able to move them, it’s the fact that we have some of our friends on the other side of the aisle that see it fit to slow the process down, but that argument is for another day.

As you know, I’m one of the Members, especially on this side of the aisle, that push for bipartisanship. Mr. Speaker, I spend quite a bit of time here on the floor talking about how when we work together, we’re able to move the American agenda forward. And I look forward to continuing to stand up on behalf of bipartisanship here in the House to accomplish a goal

to be able to make sure that our men and women in harm’s way are able to receive the representation that the American people voted for.

Mr. Speaker, I think also what we should touch on is the fact that we have sent a number of documents to the White House, and those documents happen to be law, or proposed law. We had a bill that passed both House and Senate emergency supplemental that had not only benchmarks in it, but also withdrawal dates that were sensible and that were timely to let the Iraqi Government know that we will not continue to reward a lack of action on their side and accomplishment on their side as it relates to securing Iraq. That was vetoed by the President. But I can say that not one Democrat went to the White House and stood behind the President and said that we will stop any override of the President’s veto.

□ 2100

I am so glad that we did send that bill there to show the American people that we are willing to do the things that we need to do.

We also passed a nonbinding resolution against the surge in Iraq, the escalation, I must add, in Iraq of U.S. troops and personnel. That was a strong message that the American people wanted to send out. That was successfully passed. Now, we are going to have two reports when we get back July 15, I would say to Mr. LARSON, our Vice Chair, in a report in September. I think it is going to be very, very important for the Members to remember that we are Americans first, Members of Congress. Along with that, that first chair that I mentioned, and on the second hand, that we are from two different parties, because there are men and women who are counting on us to work together.

But those of us on this side of the aisle have to provide the leadership. If the leadership doesn’t come from the White House, then we are here, sent by American taxpayers, American voters, to represent them from the said districts that we are from. But it is important that we provide that leadership and opportunity.

I would like to yield to my good friend, Mr. JOHN LARSON, from the great State of Connecticut. He is our Vice Chair of the Democratic Caucus. I want to thank you, sir, for your leadership on this very issue of Iraq.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Well, let me first and foremost congratulate the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK), and Mr. RYAN and Mrs. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and Mr. MURPHY for continuing to come to the floor, the 30-somethings, and talk about issues that are so important to this country. There is no more important issue before this Congress or this country, than the war in Iraq.

There is no more important issue to the American public. But it is clear, and I think General Odom stated it

best, because as the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) pointed out, this Congress, with its small Democratic majorities, has done what it can to end the war in Iraq and put a bill on the President's desk. The President opted to veto that bill. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle opted to stay the course with the President of the United States.

As General Odom says, and I quote, "The end game will start when a senior senator from the President's party, or a senior Member from the House of Representatives, much as William Fulbright did to LBJ during Vietnam, stands up and says no, stands up and says let's end the war."

Let's create the kind of strategic withdrawal that we need in order to preserve our troops, in order to maintain our military's readiness, in order to bring sanity back into the lives, especially the reservists and the National Guard who have put out so much for us. We are going to go home at the end of this week and celebrate the Fourth of July while our troops are slugging it out there, while this administration goes through some endgame strategy where they sound like the Bobbsey twins getting together and say, "Well, now, all of a sudden, September 15 is only a snapshot of perhaps what will happen." A snapshot.

To the men and women who are putting their lives on the line every single day, it's time to end the war. That will only happen in this House of Representatives and in the United States Senate, as was pointed out by General Odom, when Members on the other side of the aisle recognize that they have to stand up and say "no" to the President. They hint about it. They talk about it.

Meanwhile, while they dither, we lost more than 23 soldiers this past weekend. How much longer can the insanity continue here without a strategy that provides us with the strategic withdrawal to an over-the-horizon force as has been advocated on this floor by colleagues on both sides of the aisle? Why is it that RON PAUL is the only presidential candidate who has the nerve on the Republican side to talk about it without fear of being called unpatriotic or in fact booed in an audience?

This Chamber should be a chamber where we have the opportunity to speak truth to power. Thank God for people like WAYNE GILCHREST. Thank God for people like WALTER JONES. But Members on the other side of the aisle need to join with this majority so that we can create an override if the President remains obstinate, along with the Vice President, in this myopic pursuit of victory. Victory. No definition of what "victory" is, other than "staying there for as long as it takes." We see that the Iraqi government is not living up to its proposals, that the surge is an entire failure. Yet, people come to the floor and people present in the newspapers arguments that somehow the surge might work, what it just needs is

a little more time, or perhaps what it needs is even more troops.

It is time to end this war. It is time to make sure that we have people on the other side of the aisle that are willing to speak truth to power and face up to the fact that it is in the best interest of our country, that it is the very American thing to do, to stand up for our troops, to provide for our families that are here at home worried sick about the prospect of sending their loved ones into this insurgent civil war nightmare we have come to call Iraq.

The American public is way ahead of this Chamber, way ahead of the Senate. We plead with our colleagues, especially as we go forward to this July 4 weekend, to find the courage of our forebears and to stand up, since we are the body that decides on war. You have Senator WARNER saying that he ought to reconsider the authorization of this war, to do what they did in Vietnam, to recognize that the Congress, during that era, stood up and deauthorized the Gulf of Tonkin resolution that put an end to an unjust war.

We know now, of course, that we found no weapons of mass destruction. We know now that we had no exit strategy. We know now that this administration's closest adviser that they took into their bosom was Ahmed Chalabi, who ultimately ends up saying, "So what? I lied to you. So what? I lied to you. You got what you wanted. You had a civil war in your country. The Iraqis are going to have to have a civil war in their country."

Americans soldiers, men and women who have served this country with honor, go over there to fulfill their duty to their country. We have a duty and a responsibility here to make sure that we are doing everything within our power to make sure that they are safe and secure. Instead, we have stuck them in the middle of a civil war. The military objectives of this war have long since been accomplished. It is time to bring the troops home.

I commend Mr. MEEK and Mr. RYAN for having come to this floor day in and day out and discussed this thing. But we have to turn it up. Especially for those of you in our viewing audience, continue to turn it up at home. Turn up the conversation and the dialogue that so many have taken to the streets, to protest, to talk about moving other Members of this great body to come and arrive at the same conclusion that most Americans have. It is time for the safe, secure and strategic withdrawal of our troops from Iraq.

Mr. MEEK, I thank you for the opportunity to come down here and address, along with you, Members of the 30-something Group, who have continued to speak truth to power here. I especially want to commend Mr. RYAN from Ohio for his efforts, as well.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I am glad Mr. RYAN from Ohio has joined us, Mr. Vice Chairman. I just want to commend you for your work with the Iraq Watch Group and the work that you

have been doing here in the House, not only working with Members such as myself, but others that are trying to find a way that we, Mr. Speaker, can get our troops home more sooner than later. I think it is important that all Members focus on the fact that we come to the floor to make sure that we can work together.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to not only warn, but I would like to bring to the attention of the Members of the House that when that bipartisanship is blocked or Members are discouraged from voting on legislation, or voting in the affirmative, or slowing down the process, when we are trying to carry out the work that the American people sent us up here to do, then we have to rise up, the majority that the Vice Chairman speaks of so much, to do the things that we need to do on behalf of the people.

□ 1915

I think, Mr. LARSON, when you were talking, I couldn't help but reflect on what we were able to do last week as it relates to our military construction/VA spending bill, which was the largest single increase in VA in the 77-year history of the VA. It was a bipartisan vote that took place in the final analysis, and it was something that was well-needed.

This is far from what you remember under Republican control, when the chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee just got so fed up and could no longer tell the veterans groups in this country that he could help them, do what he thought he was supposed to have done on behalf of those men and women coming back, those men and women waiting in line 6 months to see a specialist or what have you. He was removed as chairman.

Now we are under a Democratic-controlled Congress, understanding our responsibilities, understanding we have two wars going on, understanding that the VA doesn't have all of the things that it needs to have because of the cuts that have been made, understanding there is a Secretary of the VA appointed by the President that was confirmed by the Republican Senate, understanding that he doesn't want to make career decisions like some Members have, one Member did, who used to be the Chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee. And I have that in my document that I will bring up a little later.

But I think it is important that we keep the focus; that we work double time in making sure that our men and women that are taking the fight to almost an unseen aggressor in the middle of a civil war in Iraq, with no end in sight, that they know that we are here, especially the majority of us here in this House, and will do everything in our power, go to as many meetings as we need to go to and get legislation to this floor and keep it in the forefront.

I say this, Mr. LARSON and Mr. RYAN, because I know there are a number of

military families that are there waiting on their loved ones to come home. I know there is a wife waiting for a husband, or a husband that is waiting on the wife to come back. I know there is a child that wants to celebrate what my children celebrate, me walking through the door, their mother walking through the door, on a nightly basis, being able to do the things that families do. But if you are a soldier, you are deployed 12 to 15 months, Mr. Speaker, hands down. And we know with this surge that the troop levels have reached a level that has endangered the readiness of our country here. I think it is important.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield for a moment, I thank you again, because I do want to say that Frank Rich wrote an important column in The New York Times yesterday, and it is one that I will submit for the record. I think it also lays it out pretty clearly.

I would like to quote here. First he is quoting retired General William Odom. "For the Bush White House, the real definition of victory has become 'anything they can get away with without taking blame for defeat,' said the retired Army General William Odom, a national security official in the Reagan and Carter administrations," when Frank Rich spoke to him most recently. "The plan is to run out the Washington clock between now and January 20, 2009, no matter the cost."

"A precipitous withdrawal is also a chimera, since American manpower, material and bases, not to mention our new Vatican-sized embassy, can't be drawn down overnight."

And here is the important thing that I think Mr. Rich says. "The only real choice, everyone knows, is an orderly plan for withdrawal that will best serve American interests. The real debate must be over what that plan is. That debate can't happen as long as the White House gets away with falsifying reality, sliming its opponents and sowing hyped fears of Armageddon. The threat that terrorists in a civil war-torn Iraq will follow us home if we leave is as bogus as Saddam's mushroom clouds. The al Qaeda that actually attacked us on 9/11 still remains under the tacit protection of our ally, Pakistan."

"As General Odom says, 'the endgame will start when a senior senator from the President's party says no,' much like William Fulbright did. That's why in Washington this fall," he goes on to say, "eyes will turn once again to JOHN WARNER, the senior Republican with the clout to give political cover to other members of his party who want to leave Iraq before they are forced to evacuate Congress. In September, it will nearly be a year since Mr. WARNER said that Iraq was 'drifting sideways' and that action would have to be taken if this level of violence is not under control and this government is able to function."

"Mr. WARNER has also signaled his regret that he was not more outspoken

during Vietnam. 'We kept surging in those years,' he told The Washington Post in January, as the Iraq surge began. 'It didn't work.' Surely," Rich goes on to say, "he must recognize that his moment for speaking out about this war is overdue. Without him, the Democrats don't have the votes," and I repeat, without Republicans, "the Democrats don't have the votes to force the President's hand. With him, it's a slam-dunk. The best way to honor the sixth anniversary of 9/11," as we take up this week the 9/11 Commission response, "is to at last disarm a President who continues to squander countless lives in the names of those voiceless American dead."

Mr. Speaker, I include the entire Frank Rich article for the RECORD.

[From the New York Times, June 24, 2007]

THEY'LL BREAK THE BAD NEWS ON 9/11

(By Frank Rich)

By this late date we should know the fix is in when the White House's top factotums fan out on the Sunday morning talk shows singing the same lyrics, often verbatim, from the same hymnal of spin. The pattern was set way back on Sept. 8, 2002, when in simultaneous appearances three cabinet members and the vice president warned darkly of Saddam's aluminum tubes. "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud," said Condi Rice, in a scripted line. The hard sell of the war in Iraq—the hyping of a (fictional) nuclear threat to America—had officially begun.

America wasn't paying close enough attention then. We can't afford to repeat that blunder now. Last weekend the latest custodians of the fiasco, our new commander in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus, and our new ambassador to Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, took to the Sunday shows with two messages we'd be wise to heed.

The first was a confirmation of recent White House hints that the long-promised September pivot point for judging the success of the "surge" was inoperative. That deadline had been asserted as recently as April 24 by President Bush, who told Charlie Rose that September was when we'd have "a pretty good feel" whether his policy "made sense." On Sunday General Petraeus and Mr. Crocker each downgraded September to merely a "snapshot" of progress in Iraq. "Snapshot," of course, means "Never mind!"

The second message was more encoded and more ominous. Again using similar language, the two men said that in September they would explain what Mr. Crocker called "the consequences" and General Petraeus "the implications" of any alternative "courses of action" to their own course in Iraq. What this means in English is that when the September "snapshot" of the surge shows little change in the overall picture, the White House will say that "the consequences" of winding down the war would be even more disastrous: surrender, defeat, apocalypse now. So we must stay the surge. Like the war's rollout in 2002, the new propaganda offensive to extend and escalate the war will be exquisitely timed to both the anniversary of 9/11 and a highstakes Congressional vote (the Pentagon appropriations bill).

General Petraeus and Mr. Crocker wouldn't be sounding like the Bobbsey Twins and laying out this coordinated rhetorical groundwork were they not already anticipating the surge's failure. Both spoke on Sunday of how (in General Petraeus's variation on the theme) they had to "show that the Baghdad clock can indeed move a bit

faster, so that you can put a bit of time back on the Washington clock." The very premise is nonsense. Yes, there is a Washington clock, tied to Republicans' desire to avoid another Democratic surge on Election Day 2008. But there is no Baghdad clock. It was blown up long ago and is being no more successfully reconstructed than anything else in Iraq.

When Mr. Bush announced his "new way forward" in January, he offered a bouquet of promises, all unfulfilled today. "Let the Iraqis lead" was the policy's first bullet point, but in the initial assault on insurgents now playing out so lethally in Diyala Province, Iraqi forces were kept out of the fighting altogether. They were added on Thursday: 500 Iraqis, following 2,500 Americans. The notion that these Shiite troops might "hold" this Sunni area once the Americans leave is an opium dream. We're already back fighting in Maysan, a province whose security was officially turned over to Iraqi authorities in April.

In his January prime-time speech announcing the surge, Mr. Bush also said that "America will hold the Iraqi government to the benchmarks it has announced." More fiction. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's own political adviser, Sadiq al-Rikabi, says it would take "a miracle" to pass the legislation America wants. Asked on Monday whether the Iraqi Parliament would stay in Baghdad this summer rather than hightail it to vacation, Tony Snow was stumped.

Like Mr. Crocker and General Petraeus, Mr. Snow is on script for trivializing September as judgment day for the surge, saying that by then we'll only "have a little bit of metric" to measure success. This administration has a peculiar metric system. On Thursday, Peter Pace, the departing chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the spike in American troop deaths last week the "wrong metric" for assessing the surge's progress. No doubt other metrics in official reports this month are worthless too, as far as the non-reality-based White House is concerned. The civilian casualty rate is at an all-time high; the April-May American death toll is a new two-month record; overall violence in Iraq is up; only 146 out of 457 Baghdad neighborhoods are secure; the number of internally displaced Iraqis has quadrupled since January.

Last week Iraq rose to No. 2 in Foreign Policy magazine's Failed State Index, barely nosing out Sudan. It might have made No. 1 if the Iraqi health ministry had not stopped providing a count of civilian casualties. Or if the Pentagon were not withholding statistics on the increase of attacks on the Green Zone. Apparently the White House is working overtime to ensure that the September "snapshot" of Iraq will be an underexposed blur. David Carr of The Times discovered that the severe Pentagon blackout on images of casualties now extends to memorials for the fallen in Iraq, even when a unit invites press coverage.

Americans and Iraqis know the truth anyway. The question now is: What will be the new new way forward? For the administration, the way forward will include, as always, attacks on its critics' patriotism. We got a particularly absurd taste of that this month when Harry Reid was slammed for calling General Pace incompetent and accusing General Petraeus of exaggerating progress on the ground.

General Pace's record speaks for itself; the administration declined to go to the mat in the Senate for his reappointment. As for General Petraeus, who recently spoke of "astonishing signs of normalcy" in Baghdad, he is nothing if not consistent. He first hyped "optimism" and "momentum" in Iraq in an op-ed article in September 2004.

Come September 2007, Mr. Bush will offer his usual false choices. We must either stay his disastrous course in eternal pursuit of “victory” or retreat to the apocalypse of “precipitous withdrawal.” But by the latest of the president’s ever-shifting definitions of victory, we’ve already lost. “Victory will come,” he says, when Iraq “is stable enough to be able to be an ally in the war on terror and to govern itself and defend itself.” The surge, which he advertised as providing “breathing space” for the Iraqi “unity” government to get its act together, is tipping that government into collapse. As Vali Nasr, author of “The Shia Revival,” has said, the new American strategy of arming Sunni tribes is tantamount to saying the Iraqi government is irrelevant.

For the Bush White House, the real definition of victory has become “anything they can get away with without taking blame for defeat,” said the retired Army Gen. William Odom, a national security official in the Reagan and Carter administrations, when I spoke with him recently. The plan is to run out the Washington clock between now and Jan. 20, 2009, no matter the cost.

Precipitous withdrawal is also a chimera, since American manpower, materiel and bases, not to mention our new Vatican City-sized embassy, can’t be drawn down overnight. The only real choice, as everyone knows, is an orderly plan for withdrawal that will best serve American interests. The real debate must be over what that plan is. That debate can’t happen as long as the White House gets away with falsifying reality, sliming its opponents and sowing hyped fears of Armageddon. The threat that terrorists in civil-war-torn Iraq will follow us home if we leave is as bogus as Saddam’s mushroom clouds. The Qaeda that actually attacked us on 9/11 still remains under the tacit protection of our ally, Pakistan.

As General Odom says, the endgame will start “when a senior senator from the president’s party says no,” much as William Fulbright did to L.B.J. during Vietnam. That’s why in Washington this fall, eyes will turn once again to John Warner, the senior Republican with the clout to give political cover to other members of his party who want to leave Iraq before they’re forced to evacuate Congress. In September, it will be nearly a year since Mr. Warner said that Iraq was “drifting sideways” and that action would have to be taken “if this level of violence is not under control and this government able to function.”

Mr. Warner has also signaled his regret that he was not more outspoken during Vietnam. “We kept surging in those years,” he told The Washington Post in January, as the Iraq surge began. “It didn’t work.” Surely he must recognize that his moment for speaking out about this war is overdue. Without him, the Democrats don’t have the votes to force the president’s hand. With him, it’s a slam dunk. The best way to honor the sixth anniversary of 9/11 will be to at last disarm a president who continues to squander countless lives in the names of those voiceless American dead.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, as we a couple weeks ago had a big brouhaha here on what we would do as Democrats to protect the homeland, I think Frank Rich is exactly right: They are already trying to get us here, and this war has created more terrorists who are trying to get at the United States. Many may be here already. We don’t know.

But if you look at what we wanted to do with the homeland security bill a couple of weeks ago, put 3,000 more

Border Patrol agents on the borders, make sure that we completely fund the cargo inspections coming in and out of our ports, make sure the technology is at our ports to find out if biological or chemical weapons are coming in, fund the first responders, fund the cops, fund the firemen, fund the equipment that they need for interoperability, so we have an agenda on how to protect the homeland that is much different than this one here.

But as Mr. Rich said, and there was also an article today in The New York Times, U.S. generals doubt the ability of Iraqi army to hold gains.

Now, no kidding. They had a big brouhaha with the speaker there, who was a Sunni Arab, who was put on leave at the request of a broad coalition of the three parties after incidents in which he lost his temper at other members and struck them or allowed his guards to rough them up. Now, I understand we have had a few brouhahas here in the House and in the Senate, but we didn’t have an occupying force telling us to get along and get together.

These guys can’t get their act together, Mr. LARSON, in a way that will allow them to take over their own country. When you look at what is going on here and the testimony before Congress on June 12 from General Dempsey, in charge of training the Iraqi army, he said there is a need to increase the Iraqi forces by at least 20,000 troops this year and a further expansion would be needed in 2008. That is not possible. He said, “However, the past few days of fighting have not yielded the kind of success that we needed. Despite the efforts to encircle leaders from al Qaeda and others there, we are not getting the job done.”

We have so many cultural differences with the Iraqi people, the difficulties in training them, the lack of competence among the administration to jump on this, the lack of troops, on and on and on and on it goes.

I want to lend my voice to yours, Mr. LARSON and to Mr. KENDRICK MEEK from Florida, to say that it is time to bring these troops home. Let’s redeploy in a very responsible way, protecting the safety of our troops, Mr. LARSON, which we all support, and make sure that we handle this politically and diplomatically, because we won this military battle, but now it is an occupation.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. As you have said on more than one occasion on the floor, Mr. RYAN, what we have needed all along here is a diplomatic surge, not a military surge. It is such a shame that we have abandoned so much of American foreign policy. In fact, more than 50 years of American foreign policy that were centered around deterrence, diplomacy and containment. Instead, we went into the wrong-headed policies of preemption and unilateralism, which have brought us to the quagmire that we are in today.

It breaks my heart to travel with JACK MURTHA to Bethesda and see the young men and women who are there, who have become the heroes, of course, in our country, but victims of a myopic, failed strategy with no exit in sight.

How much longer can the American public, or for that matter, this body, put up with the slogans that “we will stand down as the Iraqis stand up,” when more of our troops are needed and less Iraqis continue to join us; when they decide that they are going to take the next couple of months off while we slog it out in a civil war?

Our soldiers don’t know in many respects who the enemy is over there, because oftentimes they are getting played, one religious sect against another, settling ages of old scores rather than accomplishing any kind of goal of establishing a democracy or establishing a government or people that are going to stand up so that we can stand down.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Chairman, it is interesting that you would say that, and I can definitely share with you that we have to put a face on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I know time after time again there are some Members that are concerned that we may have a single focus on Iraq, and that is not the case. We are moving the House. We have appropriation bills that are moving through the process. We have legislation. We have the 9/11 legislation coming up this week. The Senate is fast at work, doing work before we leave on Friday. It is important to put a face on this.

I said before, Iraq, Iraq, and that other issue, Iraq. But look what it is doing to the country. Look where it is holding up the resources; where it is taking up so much of our time, not only of the Congress, rightfully so, because our troops are in harm’s way.

We have a President that is saying “troops will be in Iraq,” he said this in the past, “troops will be in Iraq as long as I am President.” “We will be in Iraq,” saying “we.”

This is the first time he has not had a rubber stamp Congress since he has been President. I think it is important that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, those that have to vote with their constituents and for their constituents, make sure we can work towards measures in getting our men and women out.

But to punt the ball down and say, well, let’s try on the next series of downs, we have to actually try to run the ball on fourth down. Running the ball on fourth down is having not only American families that are affected by this war in Iraq, but those that are not, letting their Members of Congress know that enough is enough.

Now, let me share this with you. We are going to fight the policy battle and we are going to make sure that our men and women have what they need to have that are in harm’s way. That is

a no-brainer. I have never run into an American or even received a letter that says "I encourage you not to support the troops." Or "I don't support the troops." You never hear that. You always hear people support the troops.

The policy is an entirely different issue, and I think it is very important to say time after time again that to move in a new direction, that is the what the American people wanted last November, is being able to have not only the guts, but the integrity to move in that direction.

It is beyond good government. It is making a commitment to those who have made a commitment to us. And they are counting on us to stand up. And when I say us, I am not talking just about good Democrats. I am not just talking about Republicans. I am talking about all Members of the House.

The reason why it is very difficult, Mr. LARSON, as you know, to move the kind of legislation that we would like to move through this process, is because in the Senate they need a number of votes to be able to do so, 60 votes, I think that is the number.

Here in the House, the majority is not all that big, even though we are in the majority. I know that the record speaks for itself, and before we leave here tonight, I am going to read what I read a week ago into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD about the accomplishments of this Congress and what we have done as it relates to this issue of Iraq and where we have run into a roadblock with the President on not only vetoing legislation, with the help of our Republican colleagues on the other side of the aisle that have been standing with the President.

I would like, if I can, I don't know if my chart is on the floor, Mr. LARSON, I had this chart with the President on it and the Republican Congress, where they borrowed so much money. I want to have a prop so I can make the point even clearer to the Members.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. You have been resilient in making this point, but I want to amplify a point you made, if I might. Again, I think Frank Rich says it fairly well. I think he puts a great deal of responsibility on Senator WARNER.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. This is the article you referred to earlier.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. The article in the New York Times written by Frank Rich.

□ 1930

I think Mr. WARNER has been on record publicly for having stated what he has. You mentioned the fact that this House has accomplished a tremendous amount, including, and I know you are going to reiterate it with your charts, including a number of agenda items that were accomplished in the first 100 legislative hours.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. That's correct.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. But over in the Senate, and most of the

general public isn't aware of this, they have a cloture rule. Cloture in the Senate means it takes 60 votes in order to pass something, which is why Mr. Rich in his article prevails upon Mr. WARNER, a senior Republican, to rein in Mr. MCCONNELL. Now MITCH MCCONNELL in the Senate has indicated that they continue to be obstructionists. Almost every single vote that has taken place over in the Senate, every single issue becomes a cloture vote which means that there are 60 votes needed in order to pass. Of course with only 50 Democrats in the United States Senate, that becomes impossible. So they become the obstructionist not only in the effort to strategically withdraw our troops and support the military and to revert back to a policy that makes sense, but also on every other issue that Democrats have been able to bring before and pass in this House of Representatives.

So, Mr. MEEK, I am pleased to join with you this evening and thank you for coming to the floor with this.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Vice Chairman, I just want to thank you for your continued leadership, and point out one fact before I go to my chart over here.

This is not an issue as it relates to, but in the 30-something Working Group, and let me just back up. In the 30-something Working Group, we like to have third-party validators. We like to have information so Members know exactly what they are voting on. We all have to go back home and talk to our constituents about the things that we have accomplished, and the resources we brought back to our district, and where we stood up on behalf of those that needed us to stand up for them.

There have been 47 key measures that have passed, 79 percent bipartisan consensus. I think that is important because what you are talking about as it relates to the Senate and what I have experienced serving with you in the 108th Congress and 109th Congress, we knew where our place was in those Congresses. We knew it was hard to bring a consensus vote because the leadership on the Republican side would fix the deck so we wouldn't have consensus, we wouldn't have bipartisanship.

With Speaker PELOSI, who encouraged bipartisanship where we can come together on issues, and these are major issues, these are not post offices. There is nothing wrong with naming post offices. I think Americans should be recognized at the local post office, and it is a wonderful privilege that we have here in Congress to do it. But I think it is important that everyone understands that across the board 47 key measures, and you know I love charts, Mr. LARSON, we are going to review those 47 key measures so Members know the time we have come together on behalf of the American people.

I say all of this to say when I spoke of the rubber stamp Republican Congress, and I have my rubber stamp, and that is one thing I have protected. It is

in my office and it is high up on the top of a cabinet. I keep my eye on it because I don't know, many of the charts I have had in the past that have been very, very effective in making the point to the Members, I call it a moment of clarity, fact versus fiction, someone, somehow these charts are leaving the floor. I don't know what is going on. I'm not saying anything, but I would love my charts back. Hopefully one of the Members will hear me.

President Bush, when you look at it, and this is by the U.S. Treasury, the foreign debt, when we talk about this war and we talk about the life of our men and women, many of them will never come home. A large number of our forces will never come home. And if they do come home, a number will come back with physical issues, emotional issues or mental issues that we have to deal with.

So what we did in an appropriations bill, over what the President calls for as it relates to mental health counseling, what the President has done in the past and what Members of Congress have done, the rubber-stamp Congress, the President, over 42 other Presidents, and this is my old chart. It is a new number, but this President has borrowed more from foreign countries than 42 other Presidents. So 42 Presidents over 224 years were only able to borrow \$1.01 trillion. This President, \$1.19 trillion at the end of the Republican control of the House. This is the Republican House here that allowed the President to rubber stamp.

Here is my point that I want to come back to that Mr. LARSON made earlier. We as Democrats and a few Republicans, sent a bill to the President that we consulted generals, we had hearings. The Appropriations Defense Committee had more hearings than the last Congress had combined on the whole issue of Iraq and this was just an emergency supplemental. I think it is important for the Members to understand that we sent that bill to the President and the President had a meeting. Members of the Republican Conference went down and had a lunch. They all came out and stood behind the President I think on the east steps, I saw it on television, and said we stand with the President and we have made a commitment to the President that we will not take part in overriding his veto as Members of the House.

Here is the Republican Congress, here is the \$1.19 trillion that we have borrowed from foreign nations. It reminds me of the past Congress. So when Mr. LARSON started talking about those willing to stand in the schoolhouse door of good policy, Mr. Speaker, I am seeing that and saying, "Okay, the American people have taken the majority from the Republicans." And I am speaking as a Republican, which is very highly unlikely here on this floor. Taken the majority from them and now giving it to the Democrats to move in a new direction. Just when we start carrying out the will of the

American people, Mr. Speaker and Mr. LARSON, how can we stop this from happening? What can we do?

So the Republican says, "Well, we don't have the votes on the floor because the American people have taken that away from us. Well, maybe in the Senate, maybe we can drum up something. We need to have bipartisan support, but we are not going to get it because we are going to stand in the way as much as we can?"

And I think it is important that the American people understand and Members of the House understand, both Democrats and Republicans, we were sent here to do something. I enjoy those Members who take extra time to work on the art of doing something and moving us in a new direction. But I see Members trying to find some sort of creative way to stop things that the supermajority of the American people want.

The first thing that they threw out, "Well, the Democrats will leave our troops without what they need."

That didn't happen.

"Well, the Democrats are soft on homeland security..."

Then we pass a bill that has done more than the Republican Congress has done since Homeland Security has been created. As a matter of fact, it was a Democratic idea that started the Department of Homeland Security so we can have the consensus that we needed. And to have the Republicans come to the floor and say that, and the facts are not there to support their arguments.

But I wanted to have this illustration here of the Republican Congress with the President addressing the Republican Congress, the President is doing the State of the Union and the picture is taken this way to show the Republicans on that side, Mr. LARSON, to go back to your point, so we have a moment again of clarity, a moment to say that not only do we have illustrations to show how it happened in the past, and that is the beautiful thing about history, and it is good you can bring this history up, and it can be lifted off the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, but to be able to let Members know that there are only so many times that you can stand in front of the will of the American people and be rewarded. Because the American people, one thing that I saw, last November, I have said here on this floor the American spirit will always rise. The American spirit will rise above partisanship.

My message to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and we always say on the floor "my good friend." But you know what, they are good friends. We work with them every day. We live the same life. Many of them are away from their families. Some of them are living in this city. They miss their family members, so we go through some of the same things that our colleagues do. So we are all here in the Chamber and our card is the same shape, and we stick it in this machine

and we vote on behalf of the American people. But I can tell you this, the American people will not reward when you go out of your way to stop their will. That is the point I wanted to make.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. MEEK, I think you have made your point extraordinarily well. I especially want to commend, especially for the viewers and listeners who regularly tune in when the 30-Something Group comes to the floor, first and foremost, call up and thank courageous people like WALTER JONES, Republican from North Carolina; WAYNE GILCHREST, Republican from Maryland; RON PAUL, Republican from Texas, who more often than not sit almost isolated, almost ostracized on the other side of the aisle. And it is not that they don't have the respect of their colleagues, because I believe sincerely they do. What they should know is that they have the respect of America because they are willing to stand up and speak truth to power.

There are many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle who would stand with them. Loyalty is important in any process, and certainly one can respect loyalty. Loyalty and fidelity are important concepts and in fact can be virtues. But when there is blind allegiance, and especially when men and women's lives are at stake, where is your voice? Will you stand together to have this institution, the United States Congress, stand up together, collectively, put an end to the war, find a process by which we together can end the war and provide, as you point out, as the most recent veterans' bill that we passed does, the greatest increase in 77 years for veterans, so that we provide the assistance to these brave men and women who have given their all. And also to provide the compassion and the caring for their family members who wait at home wondering what kind of policy is going to unfold here for them to see Congress bogged down the way it is in the obstinacy of an administration that says it is just going to run out the clock on its policy is wrong.

As Mr. Rich points out, if not Mr. WARNER, then who? And certainly we have heard the WALTER JONES and the WAYNE GILCHRESTS and the RON PAULS in the House, but we need other brave Members who have found their voice who are able when they go back home to listen to their fellow citizens and then come to this floor and join with those men of character and stand up for what they know is right.

We know that Mr. WARNER is thinking about it. We know he is talking about September. Twenty-three soldiers lost their lives this weekend. For people who are serving, tomorrow is today. The urgency is now. Find your voice prior to this July 4, strike a tone of independence from the administration that has got us here.

Historically this happened to a Democratic President during Vietnam.

It is not about Democrats or Republicans. It is about America, and it is about standing up for our troops in the field. It is about standing up for fellow Americans. It is about Americans finding their voice. Our citizens have found theirs. We need the Members of Congress here to join together, both House and Senate, to end this insanity and come together on behalf of the American public, and especially the brave men and women who serve our country so valiantly who we owe such a debt of gratitude to, and ought to show it through the courage of our policy convictions here on the floor, and then in the funding that we provide them to make sure that they have the kind of life that they richly deserve when they come home, and that we honor the memory of their sacred sacrifice that so many have made on behalf of this Nation.

□ 1945

I thank the gentleman again from the 30-Somethings for having continued to bring this debate to the American public.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. LARSON, I just want to thank you for not only your passion but your leadership. Again, I go back to third-party validators. I go back to the will and the desire. Many times we stood here on this floor and talked about, Mr. Speaker, if you give us the opportunity, if we become the majority, what we would do. Six months hasn't really even clicked by yet. Let's just say 7 months hasn't. We haven't enjoyed 7 months of being in the majority of this House. It just happened in January, and we're talking late January, mid-January, where the power changed here in this House of Representatives.

And the bills, the 47 major bills, at least three actions that we have taken, on the action we have taken on Iraq alone, major. The hearings that we've had in the Foreign Affairs Committee, double-digit hearings. Armed Services Committee, double-digit hearings. In Government Oversight, double-digit hearings. You didn't hear about these hearings because they weren't called in the last Republican Congress.

Mr. LARSON, when you were talking, I couldn't help but pull out of my book of information here, because every day we open this book, Mr. Speaker, and we find things, we call the National Archives, we call committees, we want to know what's going on here in this House, we want to know the Members that are trying to push these issues, moving in a new direction.

There's a bill, H.R. 13, by SAM FARR. He has nine cosponsors on that bill which is a bill that he has been working on. Representative LYNN WOOLSEY has legislation to bring the troops home, Iraq Sovereignty Restoration Act. Mr. FARR's legislation is to repeal Authorization for the Use of Military Forces Against Iraq Resolution of 2002, Public Law 107-243, and require withdrawal of U.S. Armed Forces from Iraq. That's the title of his bill.

We move on to Representative DAVID PRICE, who has a Comprehensive Strategy for Iraq Act of '07 which would withdraw troops as quickly as possible from Iraq. He has a list of cosponsors that are moving down that line.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Congressman RON PAUL, Congressman NEIL ABERCROMBIE, Congressman NANCY BOYDA.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I just want to make sure we don't leave anyone out. We have House Resolution 15, also expresses the sense of Congress and also immediate repeal which is done by Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE. We have also ours truly, Congressman LARSON, JOHN B. LARSON, repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Forces Against Iraq Resolution. You have Representative ELLEN TAUSCHER.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. ELLEN TAUSCHER has done a terrific job.

If the gentleman would yield just for a moment, when you're reading through these things, I can't help but think of the time, and I know that you hadn't arrived here on September 11. I served with your mom. I can remember a time when this entire Congress stood together on the steps of the Capitol after September 11 and spontaneously broke into God Bless America. It's a time that will be forever seared in my memory.

I remember a time in our caucus just this past year when the Speaker, the gentleman from New York, stood up, at a time when we knew that we only had and could only muster Democratic votes, stood up and gave a speech that I will always remember, that drew our caucus together and allowed us to go forward and place a bill on the President's desk. It was something that everyone said couldn't be done, the politics were too raw, people were too far apart, we couldn't possibly come together. But when people rise and find their voice as the Speaker from New York did, then great things can happen. A Nation can move. People find their voice because within their heart resides the great spirit of this country as you pointed out. Within every piece of legislation that you're chronicling here is a deep-seated belief on the part of its sponsors that this is the right thing to do. There are many on that side of the aisle who will disagree. I respect people's positions regardless of how they come to them. But I know the great reservoir that exists on that side of the aisle that understands what's going on, that events are unfolding daily around us and the need for us to act is now. That tomorrow has become today, that the urgency can't wait for September 15 for yet another report. The time is to act.

I plead for our colleagues on that side of the aisle, because, as Mr. Rich points out, it cannot happen without this Congress coming together. And so either we will stand together as a United States Congress and send a message and help this President find a way forward by demonstrating as a Congress

did during Vietnam, no matter who the President is, that the right thing to do here is to bring our troops home safe, secure and strategically in a manner that will allow us to regroup and refocus and go after the enemy in Afghanistan where they continue to fester and grow and regroup, the people who actually knocked down the towers, the people who struck the Pentagon and but for those brave souls on Flight 93 would have surely hit this Capitol or the White House. It's time for us to come together in that spirit.

Mr. MEEK, if it weren't for you and DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ and CHRIS MURPHY and TIM RYAN coming here and repeatedly talking about it, if you're at home, you're thinking, has Congress forgot about this urgency. Do they not pick up the papers every day as we do? When I go home, and you said it, people talk about Iraq, they talk about Iraq, and then they talk about Iraq. The facts are that without Republican support, we cannot override a veto. The facts are that without a Republican Senate that will stop the cloture rule and Mr. WARNER, or following the paths of a great American in CHUCK HAGEL, comes forward and speaks truth to power. There are people on both sides of the aisle that are great visionary Americans. We just need to come together at this time and find our voice in the same manner that Americans have already found theirs.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you again.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. As we come to a close, Mr. LARSON, I just want to again thank you for joining not only Mr. RYAN and I tonight but you have been here before in the past. I would encourage, especially with you being in the top four of our leadership here in the House, our elected leadership as relates to the Democratic Caucus, I know that you give voice to many of us that are out here pushing every day. We have good people working, not only Chairman EMANUEL, but also Mr. JIM CLYBURN and also Mr. HOYER and Speaker PELOSI.

I think it's important that we continue to push this issue on, because we are going to need bipartisanship to be able to move this agenda of safety for our men and women that are in harm's way, move this agenda for those families that are waiting on their loved ones to come home, move this agenda, Mr. Speaker, that the American people want us to move in a new direction. If we can just put partisanship aside just for a moment to do that, it will be a place in history in this country that we stood up on behalf of those men and women that are in harm's way and we followed the will of the American people. I just want to thank you, Mr. LARSON, for being here.

Mr. Speaker, I can share this with you. A, we appreciate the Members who have worked with us on the 47 bipartisan measures. B, I think it's also important to know that as these issues move to the floor, many of these issues

never would have made it to the floor if it wasn't for the leadership of the Speaker and our leadership team and the great Members here in the majority and even some of our Members in the minority. You know, we like to share here, some of the bills, on eight bills combined, they have 79 cosponsors, 76 of them are Democrats, 3 are Republicans. As Mr. LARSON identified, some of those members of the Republican Conference that have come forth, Mr. Speaker, and said, hey, I've heard my constituents, I see what the American people are talking about, those moderate voices that are there. They should be commended. We spend a great deal of time letting them know, and I know when I see them in the hall and even some of my friends that don't necessarily see the light on this issue, we still take the time to talk in a very sensible way on this because this is work on behalf of the country.

We have Members that are Reservists, that are National Guard men and women, that are in the Coast Guard and other branches of the military, they're all counting on us to have those conversations and continue to work through the issues. You want to look at good government, you look at good government.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, Mr. LARSON reminded me of something on 9/11. Everyone came together. Yes, my mother was a Member of Congress at that time. I remember she voted against giving the President authorization to go to war after that as it relates to Iraq. But I think it's important to be able to reflect on the past and find times when we have come together and try to find those times in the future and also work with the President. As much as I disagree with him on this issue of Iraq, I do respect the office of the presidency. I know every Member of Congress does. All we can do is continue to try to work together. But I do share with the Members that it is going to take bipartisanship because there are ways that they can block this from happening.

With that, Mr. Speaker, it was an honor addressing the House. I thank the gentleman from Connecticut and the gentleman from Ohio for joining me.

THE RIGHT TO LIFE, THE STEM CELL DEBATE, AND PEAK OIL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HALL of New York). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, in the few moments that we have together this evening, I wanted to talk briefly about three different subjects. The first one is a very timely one. It refers to a Supreme Court decision that I think is a very momentous decision.