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Abercrombie Bill Puts Expiration Date on 2002 Iraq War Authorization

(WASHINGTON, DC) - U.S. Representative Neil Abercrombie has introduced legislation to put an expiration date on the Authorization to Use Military Force Against Iraq passed by Congress in 2002.

“Most federal government programs have a ‘sunset’ date, and must be reauthorized by Congress to continue,” said Abercrombie, who chairs the Armed Services Subcommittee on Air and Land Forces. “The Congressional authorization used to take our country to war was based on situations that no longer exist or never existed. The rationale for the war has been resolved. The authorization should expire.”

Under the legislation co-authored by Abercrombie and Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), the original war authorization passed by Congress in October 2002 would expire 180 days from enactment of the bill, and a new authorization by Congress would be required to continue the war in Iraq.

“It should be obvious to supporters and critics of the war in Iraq that our military has achieved both objectives authorized in 2002: removal of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of a democratically-elected government,” said Paul, a senior member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. “With both objectives of the original authorization completely satisfied, Congress has a Constitutional obligation to revisit this issue and provide needed oversight and policy guidance.”

“If President Bush believes the war in Iraq needs to continue, he would have six months to convince Congress and the American people that it should be authorized,” Abercrombie said. “This debate would be about the need and the wisdom of continuing the war, with no need for recriminations about who voted for what in 2002, whether we should have invaded Iraq in the first place, or how competently the war has been conducted for the last four years. Those issues would be off the table. The only question would be, ‘Where do we go from here?’”

“Unlike other proposals, this bill does not criticize the president’s handling of the war,” Paul pointed out. “It does not cut off funds for the troops, nor set a timetable for our withdrawal.”

Both Congressmen said the measure should be supported by those in favor of continued action in Iraq and those who favor ending the war. Bill co-sponsors include Reps. Walter Jones (R-NC), William Delahunt, Martin Meehan and Richard Neal (all D-MA), John Duncan (R-TN), Marci Kaptur (D-OH), Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD), Keith Ellison (D-MN), Michael Michaud (D-ME) and Nancy Boyda (D-KS).

“We are joined by a growing group of Republican and Democratic Members who remember that the Constitution vests the power to declare war in the Legislative Branch,” said Abercrombie. “We all still believe that we live in a democracy— not a kingdom.”