



War foes plan new way to pressure Bush

By Dana Bash

They are two very different Democrats: Neil Abercrombie is a liberal from Hawaii, and John Tanner is a Tennessee conservative.

The congressmen were on opposite sides when the Iraq war began. But they're now joining forces to try to break partisan deadlock on how to end it.

"The country is disgusted with everybody," Abercrombie told CNN. "They think the president is being stubborn. ... and they think Congress failed to act in a responsible way. We have to change the direction of the conversation."

Tanner agreed.

"We've got to have a new dynamic," Tanner said in a joint interview. "You can't keep going down this road of 'You're a better patriot than this guy, you support the troops.' People are dying while that argument is going on."

Abercrombie and Tanner -- along with five other House Democrats who span the political spectrum -- are pushing legislation to force the president, within 60 days, to give Congress his plan for getting out of Iraq.

They have one Republican co-sponsor, Rep. Phil English of Pennsylvania, but insist this is the kind of legislation that can attract GOP votes.

"There is nothing partisan about this," said Tanner. "We don't ask him (Bush) to do anything other than give us his ideas, 60 days and where we go from here."

The lawmakers are challenging their own Democratic leadership to stop holding vote after vote on pullout deadlines, measures that get slim majorities by mostly party-line votes -- but not nearly enough votes to become law.

The congressmen say the [Democratic Party](#) has yet to deliver on what they say was its promise to use its new congressional power to end the war.

"We have failed to meet the expectations of the nation with regard to solving this problem," said Abercrombie.

"The country does not want us to wait. They want us to make a move now."

Democratic leaders insist that little by little, their strategy is attracting Republican support. They also say that at some point the president will have no choice but to accept Congress' demand for a timetable for troop withdrawal.

They see September, when Gen. David Petraeus delivers a report to Congress about the military's buildup of troops in Iraq, as a potential breaking point for the GOP -- when Republicans will finally vote with Democrats on a timeline for getting military troops out of [Iraq](#).

But Abercrombie, a member of the Out of Iraq Caucus, says his leaders are "taking stands that go nowhere."

"Any fool can take a stand, and most of them do. This isn't about taking stands. This is about resolving the dilemma of the war."

Democratic leadership sources tell CNN House Democratic leadership holds some differing opinions about whether to allow a vote on a bill that requires a withdrawal plan from the president but does not insist on timelines or deadlines.

Some of Abercrombie's fellow progressive lawmakers like Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-California, oppose his legislation, calling it a toothless measure that does not do enough to end the war.

Antiwar forces like Moveon.org tell CNN they will fight the legislation, because it would give war-weary Republicans a chance to challenge the president without mandating a new direction in Iraq.

"We're not going to let them help Republicans get political cover and get no change in policy," said Tom Mattzie, Washington director for Moveon.org.

When asked to respond, Abercrombie and Tanner simultaneously threw up their hands.

"Political cover? When some poor kid died this morning," Tanner said dryly, "I don't worry about political cover."