



OFFICE OF CONGRESSMAN RON KLEIN
FLORIDA'S 22ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CONTACT: 202-225-3026

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Klein Introduces Bill Ending Blank Checks to Iraq

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Ron Klein (FL-22) today introduced legislation expressing the Sense of House of Representatives that all future funding provided by the United States to the government of Iraq for reconstruction, training for security forces and fuel be provided as a loan, rather than a grant. The legislation also requires the Iraqi government to utilize its own budget surplus for reconstruction projects before reconstruction aid from the United States is spent.

“Whether you support the Iraq war strategy or not, we can all agree that when it comes to the \$600 billion in American taxpayer dollars that we have spent over the last five years, enough is enough,” Klein said. “The Iraqi government is sitting on the second-largest oil reserve in the world and expecting a multi-billion dollar budget windfall this year, yet the United States continues to finance their reconstruction. This defies common sense. American taxpayers – myself included – are not willing to foot the bill any longer.”

Klein’s legislation is the House companion to a bipartisan Sense of the Senate resolution introduced last week by Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson, Maine Senator Susan Collins and Indiana Senator Evan Bayh. The bipartisan, bicameral legislation is a common-sense proposal to require the Iraqi government to take responsibility for investing in the reconstruction of their own country.

“The United States is spending \$339 million a day in Iraq, a figure that should stagger the sensibilities of every American,” Klein said. “My colleagues and I are standing up to say that we can no longer continue to pour billions into Iraq at the expense of critical priorities here at home. The amount of money we spend in Iraq each day could house 48,000 homeless veterans, hire over 2,000 new Border Patrol guards for a year or give 2.6 million uninsured Americans access to health care. It is time for real fiscal responsibility, and that means ending the blank checks to Iraq.”

In addition, the United States spends \$153 million every month on fuel in Iraq, at a cost of approximately \$3.23 per gallon; Iraqis pay just \$1.30 per gallon for fuel. With the price of oil per barrel continuing to rise, the Iraqi government is expecting a budget windfall this year of up to \$60 billion, while at the same time, America is facing growing debt and record deficits. If the Iraqi people and Iraqi government want the U.S. military and the American people to continue to support a stabilization effort, they must stand up and pay for it.

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