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Washington, DC - Rep. Peter Welch delivered a statement on the floor of the U.S. House this morning in support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

"Since the President refuses to act, Congress must," said Welch. "For many of us, nothing could be fast enough, strong enough, or forceful enough."

This legislation begins a month-long effort to force the President to change his policy in Iraq.

The legislation requires the Secretary of Defense to begin the redeployment of troops from Iraq within 120 days of the date of enactment and to complete the "reduction and transition to a limited presence" by April 1, 2008. The bill also requires the President to prepare and submit to Congress a comprehensive strategy for Iraq. H.R. 2956 was introduced July 10, 2007 by Chairman Ike Skelton.

Floor Statement Supporting H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act

Rep. Peter Welch
July 12, 2007

M. Speaker, I vigorously opposed the war in Iraq before it began and now, well into its fifth year, the need for a new policy in Iraq has never been clearer.

The toll of this war has been devastating: more than 3,500 of our most courageous young men and women have been killed, and tens of thousands more have been seriously wounded. The toll on civilians: much higher.

And while we struggle to fund domestic priorities in Vermont and in communities across the country-health care, crumbling transportation, cost of education- we now spend \$12 billion every month on this war.

From last November's elections, to public opinion polls, to the comments I hear from Vermonters every single day, the voice of the American people is loud and it is clear: it is time to end this war. No, it is *well past* time to end this war. Since the President refuses to act, Congress must.

Since the President refuses, Congress must make it clear that the United States will not maintain permanent military bases in Iraq.

Since the President refuses, Congress must denounce the use of torture and must finally close the prison at Guantanamo Bay.

And since the President refuses, Congress must bring our troops home and ensure that they receive the care they deserve when they return.

M. Speaker, seven months ago, under the leadership of the previous Congress, a bill like this never would have been allowed to come to the floor. And now seven months later, today, there is an emerging bipartisan consensus that the President must be forced to change course.

By passing this bill today, Congress will demonstrate with the force of law what the American people well know: it is time to end the war in Iraq.

Ending this war has been my highest priority since being sworn in this January. In six months,

Congress has challenged this President to change course; we've seen those efforts struck down by veto. For many of us, nothing could be fast enough, strong enough, or forceful enough.

I cosponsored and voted in favor of legislation offered by my colleague, Mr. McGovern of Massachusetts that called for the redeployment of our troops from Iraq within 6-months. And I voted against appropriating additional funds for this war without a firm deadline for withdrawal.

And I have cosponsored legislation to help restore America's standing as a moral leader in the world and to uphold the principles of our Constitution by:

- closing Guantanamo Bay;
- outlawing torture;
- defending the right of habeus corpus; and
- prohibiting the establishment of permanent military bases in Iraq.

At the end of the day, Vermonters and Americans know that no action in the House of Representatives is enough until all of our troops are returned home.

This bill provides a starting point for progress toward realizing that goal.

Until our troops are home, I will not stop in my efforts to compel this President to end this war.