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**Congresswoman Betty McCollum
Statement on H Con Res 63
Iraq War Resolution
February 15, 2007**

Madam Speaker, there is no more important issue facing our nation than the prolonged, painful and deadly war in Iraq. Next month, America's courageous and determined troops will start year five of combat operations inside Iraq. As Iraq continues to deteriorate into a failed state of endless killing, President Bush has decided to not only stay the course, but to escalate America's combat presence.

The resolution we debate tonight puts Congress in step with the American people in rejecting the president's escalation of the war. This resolution supports our troops and sends a clear message to President Bush that he is increasingly isolated in believing that Iraq's future can only be salvaged by sending more Americans into their civil war.

Let us remember that year five in Iraq will start with over 150,000 U.S. troops in the midst of an Iraqi civil war. Year five in Iraq will start with 2,600 Minnesota National Guardsmen and women who have already served and sacrificed for a year being ordered to serve an additional four months of duty. Year five in Iraq starts with over 3,100 American troops having sacrificed their lives and nearly 24,000 troops having sacrificed their bodies.

To all our veterans and their families, I offer my prayers and pledge my support in the difficult months and years ahead. With a true sense of humility, respect and admiration for the service and the sacrifices you and your families have endured -- thank you.

Our troops have always done their jobs with skill, determination and courage.

Now, it is time for the elected leaders of this nation to respond with courage, skill and forethought to the challenges presented in Iraq.

It is time for the people of Iraq, the diverse ethnic groups, religious sects and tribal leaders, to decide whether their future is to be one of on-going murder, revenge and civil war, or reconciliation, peaceful cooperation, and security.

It is time to end Iraq's dependence on U.S. troops and to fully transfer responsibility for security and governance to the Iraqis.

It is time to start the process of bringing American troops home -- safe and soon.

It is time to bring this war in Iraq to an end.

Achieving peace in Iraq will require an Iraqi political solution. Peace will require robust, active and tireless diplomacy from the United States in partnership with Iraq's neighbors and the entire world community. This Congress has the opportunity and the obligation to advance a foreign policy vision rooted in the belief that Iraq's future requires a shared global commitment.

Tomorrow, Congress will pass this bipartisan resolution. This resolution is important because it is the second step in putting the White House on notice. The first notice was delivered to President Bush by the American people last November when they elected a new majority to Congress. The American people elected this new majority because they wanted this very debate to take place, because they reject the "stay the course" status quo in Iraq.

Instead of hearing the American people, instead of acting on the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, instead of learning from his past mistakes in Iraq, President Bush decided to escalate the war. Rather than take the counsel and advice of experienced statesmen and tested military leaders, President Bush acted alone and decided to escalate the war.

Now, our president calls himself "the decider." But, in America, the people, not the president, are the ultimate deciders. And, the people and this Congress have decided the escalation of combat troops into Iraq is misguided.

This Congress has the authority and the obligation to hold the president accountable and this House is ready to exercise its constitutional powers.

The American people are demanding action to end the war in Iraq. Let us listen to the people. Tomorrow, let us pass this important resolution and begin the process of working together, as Americans, to end the war in Iraq.

Madame Speaker, I yield back my time.