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## Cegelis vs. The Machine

by Cindy Sheehan

I am beginning to wonder what it is that such "Democrats" like Rahm Emanuel (IL), Chuck Schumer (NY), and Nancy Pelosi (CA) are protecting in Iraq. What is it that they have at stake in keeping the occupation of Iraq going? Their constituents in every case are solidly anti-war and anti-Bush. They all come from the bluest of states and/or districts. Yet when faced with the chance to defend and promote antiwar candidates who agree with the majority of Americans that it's time to get out of Iraq this year, they go into overdrive to try to destroy their candidacies.

Take the case of Christine Cegelis. Cegelis opposed the war before it started. She supports single-payer health care and a strong transition to renewable energy.

She's pro-choice, and anti-CAFTA. And she has a strong grassroots following in her district. In short, Christine Cegelis is exactly the kind of candidate that the Democratic Party needs.

On top of that, in 2004 Christine took on the thankless task of running against arch-conservative Henry Hyde (R-IL). You remember Henry Hyde—the man whose name is on key right-to-life, the man who led the impeachment fight against Bill Clinton, the man who now chairs the International Relations Committee in the House and routinely buries antiwar Democrats' attempts to investigate the lies that took us into the Iraq War that then took Casey.

Surprisingly, Christine racked up 44% against Hyde, despite being outspent by 4-1. She immediately announced that she would run again, and faced with her continuing strong grassroots opposition, Hyde decided to retire.

What was her reward for this service? Not an infusion of money to help her win an open seat against a former Tom DeLay aide—No! Instead, DCCC head Rahm Emanuel went out and found a candidate to run against her, a woman who did not even live in the district. Then, led by Emanuel, almost all the prominent Democrats in the country—John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and many others—have weighed in on behalf of Cegelis' opponent.

The new candidate deserves our praise for her service. Like my son, she served her country, and paid a high price for her service—and for that I applaud her. Tammy Duckworth has served her country honorably in and out of the military and seems to be a good person. But here is her position on Iraq, straight from the Republican talking points:

*"The fact is that we are in Iraq right now and we can't simply pull up Stakes and create a security vacuum."*

Duckworth is not a backer of setting a timetable in the Iraq War and getting out. And her lead sponsor is Emanuel, the man who infamously said, when asked about Murtha's effort to stop the war, that "At the right time, we will have a position."

Christine Cegelis is a true progressive on all the issues, and, in here is her position on the illegal and immoral occupation of Iraq:

*"The war in Iraq has taken the lives of more than 2,000 American men and women and killed and injured tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians. More than \$200 billion tax dollars have been poured into the effort. Our credibility in the eyes of the world has been severely damaged. The Bush Administration's*

*conduct in starting and executing this conflict has been a disaster from the very earliest stages.*

*I have opposed this war from the start. But revisiting what brought us to this disastrous point does not solve the problem. It is time for us to bring our troops home. The Bush Administration must provide a comprehensive timetable for withdrawal of the majority of our combat troops at the earliest possible date. We must bring home our 46,000 citizen soldiers of the National Guard and Reserve home as soon as possible, where they can continue their lives as our police officers, our firefighters, our workers and our neighbors. The U.S. must spell out a reasonable and detailed plan to transfer power to Iraq's military and police forces.*

*Defending our nation against the threat of terrorism is a top priority. The issues of Iraq and terrorism are now the same. Al-Qaeda had no link to Iraq before our invasion. Now it is a breeding ground for hatred and terror, and an ideal recruiting pool for Al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks. Extending the conflict in Iraq only gives terrorists more opportunities to foment hatred against America. Instead of lessening the threat of terrorism around the world, our war has accelerated it. We owe it to ourselves and the world to reverse this trend, and to use our foreign policy muscle to truly lessen the global reach of terror. A stable and sovereign Iraq can only occur when the U.S. becomes an ally, not an occupying force, and it is only then that we can rebuild trust in the Middle East and with the Islamic communities of the world.*

*We need to let the Iraqis determine their own future. This means letting them run their own political process, instead of meddling in it for our own political gain. That also means pledging that we will not operate permanent military bases in Iraq and renouncing any claims to Iraqi oil. We need to make sure that the Iraqi people understand that we have no intention of permanently occupying their country. If the Iraqis want international peacekeepers, we need to work with them to make that happen. The U.S. also needs to immediately involve other countries in the effort to rebuild Iraq. Dozens of countries have a stake in creating a stable Iraq.*

*The failures of this war must prevent the United States from making similar mistakes in the future. And the only way we can make sure that lesson is learned is to elect leaders who understand that lesson."*

I agree with Christine Cegelis—we need our troops home as soon and as safely as possible. George Bush, the Republican Party and too many Rubber-Stamp Democrats have created a security vacuum in the Middle East and in our own country (does anyone remember Katrina and the devastation of the Gulf States?) And if we aren't careful to elect leaders who are strong on National Security by also being strong on diplomacy and peace, Iran and who knows where else is next.

As Iraq descends into a civil war prepared and propagated by the neocons with military bases and oil pipelines being constructed with very little reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure, 82% of the Iraqi people want the occupation to end and 49% think it's just fine to kill coalition troops to do so.

Meanwhile, our own children and grandchildren will be paying for the leadership vacuum created by both of our major political parties. Bushco has put our country into deep and debilitating debt; they have made enemies for generations by their policies of terror; and we have lost and had

maimed so much of our national human treasure. Bushco is spying on and imprisoning Americans and other members of humanity without due process and selling our security to the highest bidders. In the 6th Congressional District of Illinois on March 21st, a hometown grassroots progressive is being inundated by the elite forces of the D.C. Democratic Party. She and her team are being outspent and out-advertised, with money pumped in from out-of-the-district. But Cegelis and her grassroots team are not being outworked; she has deep roots in the district, and has been running nonstop for 3 years now, and she is determined to pull an upset against the Big Boys that are trying to keep the Democratic Party from responding to its antiwar base.

You can help. As I always say, it's not about "left and right." It is about "right and wrong." It's about good, not bad. It's about time to vote for peace.

It's about time for Congressional leaders like Christine Cegelis.

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