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Vote Us Out of Iraq

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This morning, I announced my intention to introduce legislation placing an advisory measure on the Feb. 5, 2008 primary ballot that would call on President Bush to immediately withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq.

This is important because we need to make clear both to the President and the many candidates running to take his place that it is time to bring our troops home.

It's high time the Bush Administration quit ignoring the overwhelming public opposition to this war. While similar measures have passed in scores of cities across the country, California is the first state in the nation to pursue an advisory vote on Iraq.

We've had nearly 3,300 Americans killed and spent more than \$350 billion on this war, with no end in sight. We've established a democratic government in Iraq, and now it's up to the Iraqis to make it work. With the possible exception of George Bush, we all know it's time to go.

The state Legislature moved up California's Presidential Primary in 2008 to make our vote matter. Let's take that opportunity to tell the President where California stands on Iraq - and ask every presidential candidate to stand with us.

If we convince other states to join us, we can make February 5th a national referendum to end this war.

Bush has refused to bring U.S. forces home despite last year's elections and the bipartisan recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. Bush's recent threat to veto any legislation containing a timetable for U.S. withdrawal only makes matters worse.

George Bush hasn't learned from history--we've got the failed policy to prove it. If the biggest state in the nation says 'end the war now, maybe it will start to sink in.

The Vote Us Out of Iraq advisory measure will be introduced Monday. It requires a majority vote in the Senate and Assembly and the Governor's signature to be placed on the ballot. The measure would ask voters whether they support or oppose the following resolution:

The people of California, in support of the men and women serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, urge President Bush to end the U.S. occupation of Iraq and immediately begin the safe and orderly withdrawal of all United States forces; and further urge President Bush and the United States Congress to provide the necessary diplomatic and non-military assistance to promote peace and stability in Iraq and the Middle East.

If a majority of voters approve, the bill would require Secretary of State Debra Bowen to communicate the results of the advisory vote to the White House.

Three hundred and thirty-six Californians have died in the Iraq conflict--more than any other state. Along with substantial numbers of regular forces, California also has more than 800 National Guard members currently deployed in Iraq.

In addition, California is owed billions in federal funds that go unpaid as war costs soar--slowing our--economy and shortchanging state revenues for schools and health care.

I'm glad to say that I was joined by representatives of Military Families Speak Out, Veterans for Peace, Bay Area Grandmothers for Peace and several clergy members and community representatives at this morning's press conference at the Berkeley Veterans Memorial Building.

Also, I have set up a website, voteusout.org, where groups and individuals can express their support for the measure.