

I urge my colleagues to join me as original cosponsors of this important legislation, which I will introduce tomorrow.

INAUGURAL LIGHTING OF THE
CITY OF LOS ANGELES' OFFICIAL
WELCOMING MONUMENT,
THE VINCENT THOMAS BRIDGE

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-McDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 1, 2005

Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise ask for unanimous consent to address the House for five minutes.

Last Sunday, January 30, it was my pleasure to join with Los Angeles Mayor Jim Hahn, Council members Janice Hahn and Tom LaBong, State Senator Alan Lowenthal, the widow and family of the late California Assemblyman Vincent Thomas and the citizens of Los Angeles for the Inaugural Lighting of the Official Welcoming Monument for the City of Los Angeles—the Vincent Thomas Bridge.

In this time of inaugurations, it is fitting to recognize the bridge that is an integral link to one of this Nation's most active ports and that will serve as a guiding light for economic growth to our city, our State and our country.

Los Angeles is a world-class city and it is the primary point of entry into the United States for people and commerce throughout the Pacific Rim. In fact, many consider Los Angeles to be the capital of the Pacific Rim.

The Vincent Thomas Bridge represents the Gateway into the United States and I can think of no greater monument to our world-class city and to the great people of Los Angeles and the southern California region.

Sunday's event was the culmination of the collective efforts of a broad section of Los Angelinians over the last 16 years. This monument will serve as a beacon for California, the Nation and the World as to all that is good and great about Los Angeles.

I want to take this time to congratulate the members of the Vincent Thomas Bridge Lighting Committee of San Pedro and their President, Louis Dominguez for the hard work they have done to help make today happen.

Their efforts in raising the \$1,002,657 necessary to realize this project are to be commended. I would also like to thank the Port of Los Angeles and the Department of Water and Power for their major funding of this project.

Nestled in the San Pedro and Wilmington communities, the 41-year-old Vincent Thomas Bridge is named for the late State assemblyman who 50 years ago led the fight in the California legislature to build the bridge. Today it is a vital transportation link for the Port of Los Angeles.

But the Vincent Thomas Bridge also brings regional economic forces that have a profound impact on our regional and national economies.

As the southern California region continues to grow, so does the significance of the Vincent Thomas Bridge.

The Vincent Thomas Bridge connects the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, creating the largest port complex in the country

and third largest in the world. Together, these ports are responsible for upwards of 45 percent of the containerized cargo that enter our country. In addition, approximately 80 percent of the goods that come into this country from the Pacific Rim come through these two ports.

These ports are true economic engines. In 2002, the annual value of the trade handled by Southern California's two ports was \$172 billion. It is estimated that in 2010 that number will grow to \$253 billion a year.

In 2002, trade through southern California ports supported over 3.7 million jobs nationwide.

As a Senior Member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in Washington, I can tell you that I too have fought to make sure that the Nation knows the importance of our bridges, highways and ports in Los Angeles County to the economic well being of our country.

The goods that move through the southern California ports impact us all, some States more than others.

For example, annually \$16 billion worth of goods move through our ports to New York, that is \$7.8 billion a month. Illinois receives \$12 billion a year and \$1 billion a month in goods from southern California. And Texas receives \$11.8 billion a year or \$983 million a month.

I could go on, but instead would like to extend a standing invitation to my colleagues to visit this bridge and to visit our ports here in Los Angeles and Long Beach so that they too can get a first hand look at one of the major economic engines that helps drive our national economy.

THE NEXT STEP IN IRAQ IS AN
EXIT STRATEGY

HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 1, 2005

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, this Sunday, millions of average Iraqis defied the threats of violence and took a courageous first step toward democracy and self-governance. The images of Iraqis voting for the first time were truly uplifting. But before this Administration declares "Mission Accomplished" all over again, we cannot ignore the challenges that remain. We cannot simply hope that the elections will make the insurgency go away, or put an end to the violence. For too long, our entire strategy in Iraq has been based on waiting and hoping. Now more than ever, we need a real strategy to make Iraq stable and self-sufficient and bring our troops home.

President Bush came into office with clear ideas about when we use our military power and put our forces in harm's way. Five years ago, when he was running for President, Governor George W. Bush criticized President Clinton for not having an exit strategy in Kosovo. This is what he said: "Victory means exit strategy, and it's important for the President to explain to us what the exit strategy is." Two years ago, President Bush sent our armed forces into Iraq without a plan to win the peace. We had no exit strategy and therefore no victory strategy.

Two years later, we still don't. The elections are a step forward in a long process of making Iraq politically independent. But the elections don't change the fact that Iraq is still not secure. The 150,000 American troops in Iraq are no less at risk than they were last week, which sadly was one of the most tragic weeks of the war. Despite the election, the reality on the ground is unchanged—security in Iraq is not getting better—it's been getting steadily worse since the summer of 2003. The occupation is not making Iraq secure—it's only fueling the violence.

The Bush Administration has no endgame in sight. Their only strategy is to hope that security will get better. But it didn't get better after we captured Saddam, after we transferred sovereignty, or after we went into Fallujah. We can hope, but we can't plan on security improving now that Iraq has had elections. We can't count on security in Iraq getting any better as long as the United States has 150,000 troops in Iraq, and as long as we are viewed as an occupying power. That's why we need an exit strategy that includes a timetable for a U.S. withdrawal. It's the only way to change the dynamic on the ground.

A new Zogby poll in Iraq that found that 65 percent of Iraqis want us to leave, including 68 percent of Shiites and 80 percent of Sunnis. We need to recognize that the presence of 150,000 U.S. forces on Iraqi soil is fueling the insurgency. Over the last year, we've sent more troops to Iraq, but the insurgency has only gotten stronger, more sophisticated, and more deadly. We're creating more insurgents than we're neutralizing. We've killed or captured more than 1,000–3,000 insurgents every month for more than a year. But the insurgency has quadrupled in size, from at least 5,000 to at least 20,000. The Iraqi Intelligence Minister estimates that there are 200,000 Iraqis who are providing support for the insurgents.

Iraqis who voted on Sunday rejected the anti-democratic, terrorist ideology of Zarqawi. But for the most part, the insurgency in Iraq is not comprised of foreign terrorists or high-ranking Baathists. More than 95 percent of the detainees we have in Iraq are Iraqis, and more than 95 percent of those captured in the strike on Fallujah. Only a handful of the Baathists on the most-wanted list are still at large.

To have any chance of success in Iraq we need to understand whom we're fighting against. The insurgency is not comprised of any one group, and they don't subscribe to any one ideology. They are united only by their opposition to the occupation. And they are receiving support from pockets of the Iraqi civilian population that have become embittered with the occupation.

The open-endedness of the occupation also threatens to undermine the credibility of the moderate Iraqi leaders who are seen working with us. Most of the main political slates ran on the platform that they would be best suited to remove U.S. forces from Iraq. It can't happen today. But as the President of Iraq, Ghazi al-Yawar, said today, the U.S. can remove some troops over the course of this year. It's critical that we send a signal that this occupation will not last forever.

When President Bush says we're going to stay "for as long as it takes," Iraqis take that

to mean we're going to stay there indefinitely. Now that there is an elected Iraqi government, we need to have an endgame. We also need to make absolutely clear that we aren't seeking a permanent military foothold in Iraq. The President has not yet made that clear.

Under the plan I've proposed, the United States will announce its intentions to withdraw most of our forces this year. By next summer, only a small contingent of troops will remain, staying in the background to assist in the training of Iraqi forces. A smaller, lighter presence would prevent the formation of ethnic militias and the outbreak of civil war. But by staying in the background, it won't provoke bitterness and anti-Americanism among the Iraqi people. A timetable for a drawdown of U.S. forces sends a message to Iraq's new government and Iraqi security forces that soon they'll be responsible for their own security.

The two elements that are key to any exit strategy are training Iraqi forces and investing in reconstruction projects that will create jobs in Iraq. The training of Iraqi security forces didn't begin in earnest until Lt. Gen. Petraeus was put in charge this past June—more than a year after it should have. For too long, Iraqi forces were given only a couple weeks training and sent to fight experienced insurgents. With the United States providing an open-ended guarantee for security in Iraq, untrained

Iraqis saw little reason to risk their lives. As a result, their initial performance was mixed at best.

However, their performance on Sunday was encouraging. For the first time, Iraqi forces served in the foreground, with U.S. forces in the background. After a belated start, Gen. Petraeus has the training program on track. Iraqi forces are now given months of training, not weeks. If we continue to train Iraqi security forces, we can give them steadily more responsibility beginning in the coming weeks. That will allow us to bring home the vast majority of our forces over the next 12–18 months.

As we decrease our military presence, we must maintain our commitment to the Iraqi people just as we did in postwar Europe with the Marshall Plan. Our role must change from occupying Iraq to assisting Iraq in economic reconstruction. Iraq's unemployment rate continues to be 30–40 percent, and millions of Iraqis have gone without basic services. It's an outrage that of \$22 billion that Congress has committed to reconstruction, only \$4.3 billion has actually been spent in Iraq. And up to 50–70 percent of that money has been spent on security for foreign contractors.

Yesterday the Inspector General for Iraq reconstruction said that almost \$9 billion that the CPA transferred to government agencies in

Iraq is entirely unaccounted for. That needs to change. We need to invest in projects that will provide immediate jobs for Iraqis, not foreign contractors.

Finally, there are the unresolved political issues in Iraq. The key political question in Iraq now is whether Sunnis will be at the table as Iraq's constitution is drafted. Announcing an American troop drawdown will put pressure on the new Iraqi government to include Sunnis in the process. At the same time, the less the new government is seen as depending on us, the more it gains in popularity and credibility among all factions within Iraq.

Tomorrow night, in this chamber, the President has another opportunity to present something he should have presented two years ago—an exit strategy from Iraq. 150,000 troops remain in Iraq, including the 12,000 that were sent to enhance security for the elections. President Bush is asking Congress for an additional \$80 billion to fund this war. The President cannot continue to ask American troops to shoulder the sacrifice, and American taxpayers to foot the bill, without light at the end of the tunnel.

Congress must demand of President Bush what he demanded of President Clinton five years ago—an exit strategy. Victory means exit strategy, and it's important for the President to explain to us what the exit strategy is.