

WASHINGTON (Thursday, September 13) - Vermont's Congressional Delegation - Sen. Patrick Leahy (D), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I), and Rep. Peter Welch (D) - issued the following comments after President Bush's address to the nation on his Iraq policy tonight:

Leahy said, "It seems clear that the President has no idea how to end this war and has every intention of laying it on the doorstep of the next President. He would leave as many troops stuck on this treadmill next summer as we had there a year ago. The surge that was supposed to usher in a political solution among Iraq's warring factions has failed, with a settlement no closer today than it was one, two or three years ago. Meanwhile we have become an excuse for Iraq to avoid reaching a settlement. We have been in Iraq longer than we were in World War II. It's time to begin bringing our brave troops home from the middle of Iraq's civil war."

Sanders said, "President Bush misled us into this war 4 1/2 years ago, and he is still misleading us. Bush's 'troop withdrawal' program will leave us with as many troops in Iraq as we had before the 'surge' troop buildup -- about 130,000. Even more importantly, this president has no idea as to how to end this war. Bush's advisors concede that this war, already longer than World War II, could go on for another five to 10 years. This is unacceptable. We need to bring our troops home and develop a new and more effective strategy for fighting the very serious problem of international terrorism."

Welch said, "The President made clear tonight that there is no end in sight to the war in Iraq. He continues to blindly pursue a failed military strategy for a civil war that demands a political and economic solution. The American military has achieved every objective this President has given them. They are now stretched beyond their capacity, leaving America exposed to threats elsewhere around the world. Continuing to referee a civil war with no end in sight is unacceptable to our military, unacceptable to the American taxpayer, and unacceptable for America's national security. President Bush has no strategy in Iraq other than running out the clock on his presidency, knowing that this war will soon be another President's burden. It is imperative that Congress finally use the power of the purse to end this war and bring our troops home."