

MCNULTY CALLS ON SPEAKER HASTERT TO CANCEL IRAQI PM'S ADDRESS TO CONGRESS

Will Join Eighteen Colleagues in Boycott of Speech Otherwise

(Washington, DC): -- Congressman Michael R. McNulty (D-Green Island) announced today that he and more than a dozen of his colleagues delivered a letter to House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) urging him to cancel Wednesday's planned address to a Joint Session of Congress by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

McNulty issued the following brief statement:

"The Prime Minister's recent comments attacking Israel demonstrate a clear division in the foreign policy goals of the Iraqi government and the government of the United States.

"More than 20,000 American soldiers have been killed or wounded in order to give Mr. Maliki the job he now holds.

"Prime Minister Maliki's comments sound more like something you'd expect from the fanatical leader of Iran than from an ally of the United States."

Below is the text of the letter sent today to Speaker Hastert:

Dear Speaker Hastert:

We are writing to object to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's planned address to Congress this Wednesday. In the wake of comments made by Mr. Maliki and other members of the Iraqi leadership denouncing Israel, it is clear that their foreign policy goals are at odds with those of the United States. The Speaker's podium reflects our nation's values. We, the Members of the House, under your leadership, decide who receives that honor, and the list should not include anyone whose interests conflict with the United States.

On Wednesday, July 19th, in reference to the conflict in Lebanon, Prime Minister Maliki said, "I condemn these aggressions and call on the Arab League foreign ministers meeting in Cairo to take quick action to stop these aggressions. We call on the world to take quick stands to stop the Israeli aggression."

Additionally, the Iraqi Parliament voted unanimously to condemn Israel, calling Israel's actions "criminal aggression." These comments and actions are in direct conflict with the position of both President Bush, and the United States House of Representatives which voted 410-8 to support "Israel's right to take appropriate action to defend itself, including to conduct operations both in Israel and in the territory of nations which pose a threat to it, which is in accordance with international law, including Article 51 of the United Nations Charter."

This is not the first time that Iraqi leadership has made statements in conflict with the interests and policy of the United States. Today, 50 Members of Congress sent President Bush a letter denouncing the hate filled comments of Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani.

But our concerns go beyond these statements. In recent months there have been extensive reports indicating that Maliki and many in the Iraqi leadership are increasingly influenced by the government in Iran. Further, they have expressed support of terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah, the latter of which was responsible for the death of 241 United States Marines in Beirut. The House should not allow an address from any world leader who has taken such action.

This is a disturbing and dangerous trend. The goal of the invasion in Iraq was not to remove one threat in favor of another. The President's stated goal was to establish a strong liberal democracy in Iraq, which would help to bring stability to the Middle East. The aforementioned comments and actions raise serious questions about the success of this mission.

With evidence mounting that the Iraqi leadership's goals are not in the best interests of the United States -- nor the Middle East -- Prime Minister Maliki's address is inappropriate. We are unaware of any prior instance where a world leader who worked against the interests of the United States was afforded such an honor. We would like to know how Prime Minister Maliki was chosen to receive the honor, and absent an apology by the Prime Minister, urge you to cancel the address.

Sincerely,

Rahm Emanuel (D-IL)
Gary Ackerman (D-NY)
John Lewis (D-GA)
Joseph Crowley (D-NY)
Barney Frank (D-MA)
George Miller (D-CA)
Shelley Berkley (D-NV)

Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)
Steven Rothman (D-NJ)
Frank Pallone (D-NJ)
William Delahunt (D-MA)
John Olver (D-MA)
Ed Markey (D-MA)
Artur Davis (D-AL)

Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)
Michael McNulty (D-NY)
Nita Lowey (D-NY)
Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)
Sander Levin (D-MI)
Tim Bishop (D-NY)

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