

News from U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC)

Thursday, October 10, 2002 – For Immediate Release

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Spratt Substitute to Iraq Resolution Draws Wide Support

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. House of Representatives today passed H.J. Res. 114, a resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq if it refuses to comply with resolutions of the U. N. Security Council and destroy its weapons of mass destruction.

Before approving the resolution, the House took up the Spratt Substitute to the Administration's war powers resolution. More than a third of the House voted for the Spratt Substitute, including 70 percent of all Democrats, and seven Republicans.

The Spratt Substitute:

1. Urged the President and the Security Council to set up a new and tougher regimen of Iraqi arms inspection, backed by force if necessary.
2. Authorized military action if Iraq resisted such inspections or the destruction of any missiles or chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons that the inspections uncovered, if the Security Council called for force to compel Iraq's compliance.
3. Set up a second vote in Congress if Iraq resisted inspections and the Security Council did not pass a resolution calling for force that the President deemed sufficient. In this case, the President would be able to obtain authorization to use military force from Congress on a fast-track, up-or-down basis, by certifying:
 - Further action by the Security Council is unlikely to compel Iraq to disarm;
 - Force is the only option available;
 - A broad-based coalition is being formed to deal with Iraq; and
 - Action against Iraq will not adversely affect the war on terrorism.

H.J. Res. 114, sent by the Administration to Congress, authorized the use of force against Iraq if Iraq refused to comply with arms inspection, without further action of Congress or the Security Council.

The debate over the Spratt Substitute was not an argument about ends but about means. Supporters of both texts agree that Saddam Hussein is a menace and that Iraq should be stripped of its weapons of mass destruction, by armed force if necessary. The Spratt Substitute supported the exhaustion of

other remedies and the use of military force as a last resort. If military action is used, it called for assembling a broad-based coalition as in 1991, and not going it alone.

Today's votes were the culmination of a process that began shortly after the President's speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002. When congressional leaders started negotiating with the White House on September 19 over terms of a war powers resolution, U.S. Rep. Richard A. Gephardt (D-MO), the Democratic Leader, asked Spratt and U.S. Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO), the ranking Democrats on the Armed Services Committee, for input on how to improve the White House draft resolution. Some of their ideas made the cut; some did not. Spratt put together an alternative resolution calling for a second vote in Congress if the Security Council did not authorize the use of force. Spratt's resolution was one of two alternatives made in order as amendments to the Administration's resolution.

"I thought my resolution was the best of the lot," said Spratt, "and when it didn't pass, I had to decide how to vote on a resolution that I had tried in many respects to amend. I hope that the next order of business with Iraq is a new and tougher round of arms inspections, sanctioned by the Security Council, and that a solution short of war will be found. The President told us that to get to that goal, he and Secretary Powell needed a strong hand. So, I voted for final passage of the resolution, hoping that the force it authorizes will not have to be used."

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Note: The House vote on the Spratt substitute was 155 yes, 270 no.