

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

Assistant to the Democratic Leader

Ranking Member, Committee on the Budget

US House of Representatives – Washington, DC

[www.house.gov/spratt](http://www.house.gov/spratt) | [www.house.gov/budget\\_democrats](http://www.house.gov/budget_democrats)

---

Wednesday, March 31, 2004 – For Immediate Release

Contact: Chuck Fant, 202-225-5501

### **Spratt Statement Supporting Travel Reimbursement and Combat Medals for U.S. Troops Serving in Iraq and Afghanistan**

*WASHINGTON – On Tuesday, March 30, U.S. Rep. John Spratt (D-SC) submitted to his House colleagues the following statement supporting S. 2057 and H.R. 3104. Both bills passed the House that day.*

“Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 2057 and H.R. 3104. S. 2057 provides retroactive travel reimbursements for troops who returned home before December 19, 2003 from Iraq and Afghanistan for rest and recuperation leave. H.R. 3104 provides separate combat medals for the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. I think you would be hard pressed to find a Member of Congress who opposes these low cost bills to benefit our troops. The only question is: What took us so long?”

“During debate on the \$87 billion Iraq supplemental last October, I introduced an amendment that would have provided for free travel all the way home from Iraq and Afghanistan for troops on R&R leave, and would have required separate campaign medals be issued for service in Iraq and Afghanistan, among other important personnel benefits. The Republican leadership in the House would not even let this amendment on the floor for a vote. So here we are six months later, and we are only just now revisiting these issues.

“Why so long? Quite simply, the Administration opposed separate war medals for Iraq and Afghanistan, preferring instead to issue one service medal for the Global War on Terror. I understand the Administration’s desire to put these operations in a larger context, but that does not translate to our troops on the ground. Circumstances leading up to and in Iraq and Afghanistan were very different, as are the challenges our troops face on the ground today. Furthermore, the Pentagon policy not only authorized a single medal for Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom, it does not prescribe service stars to reflect service in both conflicts or multiples tours of duty in the same conflict. This is blatantly wrong. Campaign and service medals proudly reflect military service in a particular conflict, enhance esprit-de-corps, and are a strong part of military history. It means a great deal to an infantryman to look at his fellow soldiers and say ‘Iraq – yes sir, I was there.’”

“The British established the Iraq Campaign Medal to recognize service in, and in support of, operations in Iraq. Australia established separate ‘Afghanistan’ and ‘Iraq’ clasps for their Active Service Medal to reward OEF and OIF service. So why would we deny our servicemen, who are sacrificing so much for our country, separate medals that can boost morale for such a small price?”

“And if the Global War on Terror continues for many years on many fronts as the President has suggested it might, are we to expect that the Administration would prefer that we issue no new campaign medals in perpetuity? H.R. 3104 makes sure this will not be the case.

S. 2057 and H.R. 3104 are low cost, long needed morale boosts for our troops in the field, and though it has taken us too long to get to them, I wholeheartedly urge their passage today.”

# # #