

Let the American and Iraqi People Vote Directly to End the War: A Strategy to Turn Majority Support for Withdrawal into a Mandate for Peace



This is an overview of the strategy of using ballot measures in the November election calling for one-year withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, as well as a national referendum in Iraq on the U.S. occupation. Here is a directory of the contents:

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Give Voters a Direct Say on Key Issues

Many Democratic voters are concerned that the divisive and extended campaign between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama could harm the party's presidential chances in the fall. Rather than focusing on the issues, the campaign is becoming dominated by questions about whether the candidates have the necessary qualifications and character to be president. Most Democrats do not have such questions or doubts. Further, most believe that the essential differences are not between Clinton and Obama but between them and the Republican nominee, John McCain.

There is a way to refocus the race on the issues, however, to unite Democrats around what they believe in, and that is by giving voters a direct say on the key issues. Advisory measures on national issues can be placed on ballots by state legislatures because almost all states can put legislative referendums to a vote of the people. For example, in 1982 four state legislatures placed measures on the ballot that called on the federal government to halt the nuclear arms race. They did so because the nuclear freeze had wide popular support, and they all passed.

One key way for Democrats to win in November is for Democratic-controlled state legislatures to place voters' advisory measures on state ballots on the three top issues as identified by the voters: the economy, the war in Iraq, and health care. These measures would present voters with the Democratic positions on these issues, which broadly can be described as restoring economic security, opportunity, and fairness; establishing a universal health care system; and ending the war. Such measures will help refocus the candidates on the issues and show the country the winning agenda that unites the vast majority of Democrats and also is supported by most Americans.

Among these three issues, the Iraq War is central. The country cannot afford both the war *and* a universal health care system and an effective response to the recession. We cannot afford to throw billions away on the war *and* invest in green jobs and renewable energy. McCain has made continuation of the war the centerpiece of his campaign, yet polls show that 60 percent of Americans want all U.S. troops withdrawn from Iraq within one year. If Democrats want to win, they need to put what most Americans support to a vote. Such a measure could read: "Shall the Congress and the President of the United States end the U.S. occupation of Iraq by immediately beginning the safe and orderly withdrawal of all U.S. troops and military bases, to be completed no later than November 4, 2009?" (one year after the election).

There are fourteen states with a Democratic legislature and governor: Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia. In Connecticut, Hawaii, and Rhode Island, Democratic legislatures can override a Republican governor's veto, and in Minnesota and Vermont it would take an additional three or four Republican votes to do so. In eight states with Democratic governors, if Democratic support in the legislature is solid, a switch of two to five Republican votes would put these measures on the ballot: Delaware, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. As a necessary compromise to get measures on the ballots in those states, Republicans could offer voters a choice by putting their positions side by side with those of Democrats.

A recent SurveyUSA poll compared support for McCain and Obama and McCain and Clinton in all fifty states. Twenty-three states were listed as potential toss-ups, states in which either Clinton or Obama were within 5 percentage points of McCain. Ten of those states are controlled by Democrats, and six more have Democratic governors and mostly Democratic legislatures. Democratic ballot measures could be the deciding factor in those states--and thus in the presidential election. In addition, ballot measures could play a decisive role in half of the most competitive Senate races. Larger Democratic majorities in Congress, especially in the Senate, will be essential to passing legislation.

In sum, if Democrats want to win, this is a simple strategy and an essential element in what will be needed to defeat John McCain and the Republicans in November.

[For more information, see the "Strategy to Quickly Place Antiwar Measures on Ballots" file]

Ballots or Bullets?

When General Petraeus testified in early April about the surge, his main purpose was to convince Congress to appropriate another \$100 billion for the Iraq War. Congress is likely to do so, even though they were elected in November 2006 to end the war. Public opinion continues to support withdrawal even with the surge's purported success--which looks more dubious after recent fighting between Shiite factions. According to the latest Rasmussen poll, 59 percent of Americans want U.S. troops withdrawn from Iraq within one year. Although most antiwar members of Congress are convinced they can do nothing to honor public opinion because of the united opposition of Republicans and President Bush, there is one step they can take that will bring us closer to the withdrawal that the majority of Americans--and Iraqis--want.

They can support a national referendum in Iraq on whether and for how long the U.S. occupation of that country should continue. An amendment to the funding bill supporting such a referendum is the next best thing to a vote for withdrawal. It could either encourage Iraq to hold such a referendum or mandate that it be done as a requirement for receiving government or reconstruction aid. Adding this referendum to the provincial government elections scheduled to take place in Iraq before October 1 is the best way to do this.

Such legislation probably will get Republican support. In a little-noticed poll (Program on International Policy Attitudes, November 2006), two-thirds of Republicans said they would support the withdrawal of U.S. troops within one year if the Iraqi people requested it (support for withdrawal also increased by more than 20 percent among both Democrats and independents). Under those conditions, Republicans switch from two-thirds support for the war to two-thirds support for withdrawal. Supporting a referendum in Iraq does not interfere with the president's or the generals' conduct of the war--the principal reasons for opposing binding withdrawal timelines. And it will be hard for Republicans to oppose this exercise in democracy, whose spread is one of few remaining justifications for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

A referendum on whether and for how long the U.S. occupation should continue would have to be passed by the Iraqi parliament (a majority of whose members support withdrawal), and then approved by the Iraqi government. The ballot measure could ask a series of questions (similar to those asked in polls), such as whether the occupation should continue until Iraqi forces can take over, be ended in two years, in one year, in six months, or immediately. At least

two-thirds of Iraqis want U.S. troops to leave within a year, and thus it's fairly certain that Iraqis would say yes to ending the occupation. Passage of a referendum would clear the way for the Iraqi government to request that U.S. forces be withdrawn.

How much good can we do in a country where at least two-thirds of the people want us to leave, and a slight majority support the use of violence against U.S. troops--in order to drive us out? By their vote in a referendum the Iraqi people will be asserting, democratically and nonviolently, that they are taking responsibility for their own country. In doing so, they will open up greater possibilities for reconciliation within Iraq and for regional governments and the international community to help in securing, reconstructing, and stabilizing the country.

Because the United States will have been voted out of Iraq, not driven out by violence (thus giving terrorists a victory), Democrats who support withdrawal cannot be accused, as John McCain and the Republicans have done, of "cutting and running" or of abandoning Iraq to greater violence. That's the main reason the Democratic presidential candidates have not supported a one-year withdrawal of U.S. troops, as the majority of voters do. More than that, the creation of a democratic alternative to violence will enhance the security of the United States. The passage of a referendum in Iraq, if the results are honored by the U.S. government, will do more than any other measure to reduce recruitment for al Qaeda and to protect the American people from the threat of terrorism.

[For more information, see the "Let the Iraqi People Vote on the Occupation" file]

A Strategy to Quickly Place Antiwar Measures on Ballots in States and Cities

This strategy involves *ballot measures* put on by the votes of city councils, county boards of supervisors, and state legislatures and governors. Measures can be placed on ballots by government officials in virtually all states and by an estimated 90 percent of local governments. There is no longer enough time to qualify citizen-petition initiatives, in which a set number of signatures must be gathered by a set date, in what are known as the twenty-four ballot initiative states. *No signature gathering is required.* The process is basically lobbying to pass legislation, which means creating coalitions of organizations, getting endorsements (and maybe some petition signatures to demonstrate support), and lobbying legislators to introduce a measure and to pass it. With a sympathetic city or county government or state legislature, especially one that has already opposed the war, it may not even involve all that much lobbying, because they may be predisposed to support putting an antiwar measure on the ballot.

That said, there isn't a great deal of time to get these measures on the ballot. The deadline for city and county ballots in California, for instance, is August 8. We have not researched the deadlines elsewhere, but they may be similar or somewhat earlier. The first step, of course, would be to find out the deadline in your area. Strategies to maximize the likelihood that measures can be placed on the ballot quickly include: (1) approaching those cities, counties, and states that will be most receptive to doing this; (2) making the case that placement of such measures on ballots could have a major influence on the outcome of the 2008 presidential and congressional elections; (3) placing measures on the ballot whose provisions are supported by 60 percent or more of the American people; (4) adding this as an essential element to already existing campaigns. Tactically, online organizing allows campaigns to get going quickly.

The starting point to getting measures on ballots is to lobby city and county governments that have already passed resolutions opposing the war or calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops to urge their state legislatures to put measures on the ballot. There are almost three hundred such cities and towns (and a few counties) around the country that have done so, including such large cities as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Atlanta, San Francisco, Sacramento, and Seattle. There are seventeen state governments that are controlled by Democrats, in which measures could be placed on the ballot after some lobbying. There are eight additional states where it would take the votes of two to five Republican legislators to get measures on the ballot. If a state did not put a measure on the ballot, including in half the states in which a statewide measure is unlikely, then the city or county could do so.

These measures could be part of an overall strategy to place measures on the ballots in potential states that would address the top three issues as identified by voters: the economy, the war, and health care. Statewide ballot measures are possible in as many as twenty-five states (and in sixteen of the twenty-three states that have been identified as toss-up states for Clinton and Obama against McCain), while city and county ballot measures are possible in most of the remaining states. Someone who wanted U.S. troops withdrawn from Iraq within a year might also be supporting John McCain for other reasons. Ballot measures would enable them to make an informed choice between their desire to end the war and to support McCain (or other pro-war Republicans), knowing that he would not do so. Such measures might make the difference in key states and congressional districts, including in nine of the twelve most contested Senate races.

Putting antiwar measures on the ballot, as well as measures on the economy and health care, will complement and strengthen existing strategies and campaigns. First, they help elect Democratic candidates. Second, they help lay a grassroots organizational foundation, create a mandate, and develop the powerful arguments that will be needed to pass the reform agendas contained in these ballot measures. In short, they enable mobilization around the issues as well as around candidates, and they are useful not only in winning elections but in governing.

Three scenarios are possible: (1) if this strategy is supported by grassroots peace groups, then it could be on the ballot in a number of cities and a few states; (2) if it gets the active support of major national groups (such as MoveOn) or antiwar coalitions, then it will be on the ballot in more cities and more states; (3) if this strategy is supported by the Democratic Party nationally, as well as by the presidential candidates, as an essential means of defeating John McCain and the Republicans, then such measures could be on the ballot in most of the potential states as well as in a large number of cities.

If these measures are on enough state and local ballots, their impact will not be confined to those states but will become something candidates run on or oppose nationally, affecting votes in all states. If they are on the ballot in fewer places, they will have less influence on the election, but the outcome can be taken as “representative” of public opinion more broadly. In this way, these measures can have a major influence in shaping the actions of the new president and Congress, by demonstrating support for a one-year withdrawal of all U.S. troops and for a referendum on the occupation in Iraq. They can lay the foundation for ending the war in 2009.

In evaluating this strategy of giving voters a direct say on withdrawal from Iraq, the overall benefits need to be weighed against the effort involved. The benefits include:

First, for the elections, it will strengthen the positions of Democratic candidates, both presidential and congressional, on withdrawal from Iraq, moving their positions closer to that of the democratic majority, thus making their election more likely. It can help strengthen the issue

connection between the war and the economic crisis, a winning combination for Democrats. And it will isolate the pro-war positions of Republican candidates, making their defeat more likely.

Second, it makes ending the war, sooner rather than later, completely and not partially, more likely. Any Democratic president and Congress will need this mandate as a counterweight to those who argue for continued occupation, including the military and the Republicans and their own fears of what might happen if the United States withdraws. Ending the war sooner and completely will make it easier for Democrats to govern: we cannot afford both the war and to implement the ambitious reforms proposed in areas such as health care and renewable energy. It also will improve the outcome in Iraq after U.S. forces leave, make the United States safer from terrorism, and improve the image and influence of the United States in the world.

To realize these benefits, the effort involved is essentially a lobbying campaign over the next three to four months to pass legislation in places where local and state officials are already likely to be receptive to putting such measures on the ballot, largely using existing groups and coalitions to do so. There will be some effort involved in passing these measures once they are on the ballot in November, but major resources will not be needed in most places: 60 percent of Americans already support such a measure, and that support will be even greater in the Democratic-controlled cities/counties and states where these measures in the main will be on the ballot.

[For more information, see the longer “Strategy to Quickly Place Antiwar Measures on Ballots” file]

National Ballot Measure Possibilities

Potential statewide ballot measures: 27 states

Percentage of national population: 42 percent

Potential electoral votes: 258

Potential local ballot measures: possible in most of the remaining 23 states

All measures would have to be placed on the ballot by city councils, county boards of supervisors, or state legislatures. No petition signatures would be required.

Placed on ballot by Democratic legislature and Democratic governor (14 states)

Arkansas

Colorado

Illinois

Iowa

Maine

Maryland

Massachusetts

New Hampshire

New Jersey

New Mexico

North Carolina

Oregon

Washington

West Virginia

States with Democratic legislatures that can override a Republican governor's veto (3 states)

Connecticut
Hawaii
Rhode Island

States with Democratic legislatures that can override a Republican governor's veto with a shift of four or fewer votes (2 states)

Minnesota
Vermont

States with a divided legislature and a Democratic governor in which the shift of two to five Republican votes would place a measure on the ballot (8 states)

Delaware
Kentucky
Michigan
Montana
New York
Pennsylvania
Tennessee
Wisconsin

City and county measures are possible in almost all the remaining twenty-three states.

Effect of ballot measures on key congressional races

Ballot measures potentially can have a major or some influence in two-thirds of the seventy-eight key House races. Some examples of major cities within these districts where there could be ballot measures that would force the candidates to take a stand on the war. In all instances, measures would have to be placed on the ballot by city councils or county boards of supervisors. Gathering signatures on petitions would not be required.

New Mexico, 1st District: Albuquerque, 75 percent

Ohio, 1st District: Cincinnati, 50 percent

Ohio, 15th District: district includes the downtown and western portions of Columbus, percentage of district unknown

Alaska, at large district (whole state): Anchorage, 40 percent

Nevada, 3rd District: Henderson, 40 percent

Arizona, 5th District: Scottsdale, 37 percent

Louisiana, 6th District: Baton Rouge, 35 percent

Florida, 8th District Orlando, 33 percent

Georgia, 12th District: Augusta, 31 percent

Illinois, 14th District: Aurora, 27 percent

Nevada, 2nd District: Reno, 27 percent

New York, 25th District: Syracuse, 23 percent

Oregon, 5th District: Salem, 23 percent

Connecticut, 4th District: Bridgeport, 22 percent

California, 50th District: Escondido, 22 percent
Kansas, 3rd District: Kansas City, 22 percent
Indiana, 8th District: Evansville, 20 percent
Washington, 8th District: Bellevue, 20 percent
Colorado, 4th District: Fort Collins, 20 percent

State and local ballot measures can potentially be decisive or influential in two-thirds of the key Senate races: Alaska, Colorado, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Oregon

[For more information, see the “State and Local Ballot Measure Possibilities” (a detailed list of such possibilities in every state) and “Impact of Antiwar Ballot Measures on the Election” files]

How Antiwar Ballot Measures and a Referendum in Iraq Can Turn the Iraq War from the Centerpiece of John McCain’s Campaign into One of the Main Reasons for His Defeat

John McCain is the Republican nominee, and Barack Obama may well be on his way to becoming the Democratic nominee for president (the argument that follows applies equally well to Hillary Clinton, however). That sets up a confrontation between the Republican candidate who has been most in favor of the war with the remaining Democratic candidate who is most opposed to it. The war is likely once again to take center stage in the campaign, even though the economy will continue to be the number-one issue with voters.

The antiwar ballot measures and referendum strategy is crucial to electing pro-peace candidates and to defeating pro-war ones, McCain preeminently, in six ways.

Strengthens the Democratic Nominee’s Position on Withdrawal. Obama plans to withdraw all combat troops--about half the troops--within sixteen months. Yet 60 percent of Americans want all the troops withdrawn within one year, which is what the suggested ballot measure requires. By improving Obama’s position on withdrawal, the ballot measure will help clarify his differences with McCain on the war, and align Obama with what most Americans want.

Creates a Clear-Cut Choice between War and Peace. The ballot measure’s call for one-year withdrawal will highlight McCain’s support for an indefinite war and occupation. Voters who support withdrawal will be forced to confront whether they can also support McCain (who has made support for the war the centerpiece of his campaign). Without ballot measures, that choice will become less clear-cut. This is particularly important for independent voters. McCain cannot win without the support of independents, yet independents swung their support to Democrats starting in 2006 largely because of their opposition to the war. The ballot measures can help keep them supporting Democratic candidates. Making this choice clearer will happen not only in the campaign but in the Senate, where both McCain and Obama serve. The ballot measure campaign is likely to lead to stronger bills on the war in Congress in an effort to put McCain’s unpopular positions on the record. Without such ballot measures, Democrats are less likely to use Congress in this way, as they have shown so far in not running strongly on their opposition to the war.

Redefines Victory. The ballot measures, which include support for a referendum on the occupation in Iraq, can directly confront the claims made for the surge, of which McCain is a big booster. The referendum in Iraq is the political solution that has so far not occurred with the surge, whose goal was to reduce the violence enough to enable political reconciliation. McCain wants victory in Iraq, and the referendum has the capacity to redefine victory--as a victory for democracy. We brought democracy to Iraq, and we can leave by being voted out, not by being defeated by terrorists. McCain's charges that the Democrats are defeatist or will "cut and run" will have little meaning when we are voted out by people who will be saying in effect, "We want to take responsibility for our own country, including for our safety and security."

Redefines Who Is Most Qualified to Be President. The public is with the Democrats on the war, and if that were the only issue at stake, McCain would lose. However, the public believes McCain is better prepared to be president, to handle international crises, and to be the commander in chief. The ballot measures can help redefine what this means. If there are ballot measures here and a referendum is held in Iraq, and the U.S. government honors the results, it will be a great blow to terrorist group recruiting and support because there will be a democratic, nonviolent alternative to violence, and this will make the United States safer from the threat of terrorism. By supporting this approach, Obama can show that he is as fit as McCain to be president, to handle international crises, and to be commander in chief, because he will have helped make the American people safer--which is the underlying concern expressed by these issues. Without the referendum, ballot measures here would come down to setting a date for withdrawal, and McCain's message of "cutting and running" could be seen as having some plausibility. The referendum also confronts McCain with a choice: Is he more for continued occupation than for the exercise of democracy that the referendum represents, when bringing democracy to Iraq is one of the few remaining justifications for the war (the others are to make Iraqis and Americans safer)?

Elects More Democrats to Congress. Widespread antiwar ballot measures can help elect more pro-peace candidates than would be the case by solely working to elect candidates directly. They can influence or be decisive in the outcomes of as many as two-thirds of the competitive Senate and House races. Voters who support withdrawal will be forced to confront whether they can support someone who is for continued war. The ballot measures, by supporting withdrawal and calling for the funds to be used to address unmet needs, will be able to bring in the economic costs of the war more clearly and directly than would be the case without them. In addition, by threatening defeat to those who continue to support the war, ballot measures, especially when combined with a referendum in Iraq, make it possible that Congress could vote for a withdrawal timeline before the November election, but especially in the period between the election and when the new president and Congress take office. Voters are disaffected with Congress largely because it has not stopped the war. By enabling congressional Democrats to take a strong and effective stand on the war, the ballot measures can strengthen voters' support for Democrats and energize the Democratic base, helping to elect more pro-peace members of Congress. For example, single women are among the Democrats' strongest constituencies, they are the strongest constituency against the war, and they are less likely to vote than others--because they don't see what difference it makes. Obama is energizing them, and the ballot measures, and their likely effects, can also do so.

Makes Progressive Reform More Likely. What is at stake in this election is not only a Democratic majority in Congress but the possibility that this can be a realigning election, in particular one in which Democrats can come close to the 60-vote majority in the Senate that can

open the doors to progressive reform. Ballot measures could be decisive in deciding whether a Democrat or a Republican is elected to the Senate in as many as eight states (Alaska, Colorado, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Oregon) as well as solidifying the Democratic candidate's lead in New Mexico. That's two-thirds of the key Senate races. It is for this reason that Democratic Party leaders may overcome their reluctance to support one-year withdrawal and instead grasp the pragmatic political benefits, making it more likely that antiwar measures would be put on the ballot in the seventeen states in which Democrats control the state government.

Even in the absence of a realigning election, the ballot measures and referendum will make governing easier. If the ballot measures and the referendum votes occur, Democrats will not be hampered by charges of "cutting and running" or of having caused a U.S. defeat, as they have been after several previous wars, beginning with Korea. Such charges make Democrats more conservative and more willing to use military force than they otherwise would have been. This in turn hampers the domestic agenda, as we saw when the Vietnam War destroyed President Johnson's domestic reform plans. If the Iraq War continues into the new administration, its distracting influence and use of resources could hamper the administration's domestic reform agenda. We cannot afford both the Iraq War and universal health care or the kind of programs needed to limit climate change, especially not during a recession. By helping bring the war to an end sooner rather than later, completely rather than partially, the ballot measure and referendum strategy can make implementation of a progressive reform agenda more likely.

[For more information, see the "Impact of Antiwar Ballot Measures on the Election" file]

A Call to Turn Majority Support for Troop Withdrawal into a Mandate to End the Iraq War

We believe that the Iraq War should be central to the 2008 election and to the decisions that voters make. Four thousand U.S. troops are dead. One million Iraqis have been killed, and millions more have been driven into exile or forced from their homes. The war will ultimately cost at least two trillion dollars. Chances of achieving universal health care, of addressing climate change, of alleviating the recession, and many other important reform agendas will be hampered as long as the war continues.

Six out of ten Americans believe that all U.S. troops should come home from Iraq within one year. Yet the war has not been stopped. Despite a mandate from the 2006 elections for withdrawal, Congress has been unable to end the war. John McCain has made endless war the centerpiece of his campaign. And the Democratic presidential candidates still do not support what 60 percent of Americans, and more than 80 percent of Democrats, want--bringing all the troops home within one year.

We believe that the war will not end until (1) a pro-peace majority in Congress and a pro-peace president have been elected, and (2) voters in the United States and in Iraq have a direct say on the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Both will be necessary to transform majority support for withdrawal into a mandate to end the war.

The 2008 election has become a historic campaign for change from the failed policies of the Bush administration, including for an end to the war. However, the historical record, including recent history, warns us to be cautious about relying on promises to end a war, and certainly skeptical about ending it sooner rather than later and completely rather than partially.

We believe that ending the war also will require voting directly on ballot measures in the United States calling for a one-year withdrawal of all U.S. troops as well as a national referendum in Iraq on the U.S. occupation.

Measures against the war can be placed on ballots in the November election by state legislatures in as many as twenty-seven states. County and city ballot measures are possible in most of the other twenty-three states. It is not too late to get measures on the ballot, and no petition signatures will be required. If they are widespread enough, these measures can create a grassroots national referendum for peace.

There is a simple way to get measures on the ballot in the time required. First, by going to city and state governments that have supported or are likely to support withdrawal and asking them to put it on the ballot. Second, by making the antiwar measures one of three advisory votes on the key issues in the election according to voters: the economy, the war, and health care.

Ballot measures will not only be important in themselves to help create a mandate to end the war, but, if widespread enough, they will help accomplish the other goal needed to do so: electing a pro-peace majority in Congress and a pro-peace president. They will force the presidential and congressional candidates, Democrats and Republicans, to choose between a real peace or continued war, helping defeat those who choose war. They will help strengthen the withdrawal positions of Democratic candidates, committing them to do what the majority of Americans want. They can help turn John McCain's support for ongoing war from the centerpiece of his campaign into a key reason for his defeat. Moreover, if they are widespread enough, they can help elect a Democratic majority in Congress that is large enough to pass progressive legislation of all kinds.

This campaign can succeed because a strategy of direct democracy for peace has worked before. The 1982 nuclear freeze initiatives, which called for a halt to the nuclear arms race, were approved in nine states and more than fifty cities, involving 30 percent of the American people, catalyzing a powerful movement that helped end the Cold War and the nuclear arms race.

We also can support the Iraqi people in voting in a national referendum there to end the U.S. occupation. With at least two thirds of Iraqis wanting all U.S. troops withdrawn within a year or less, Iraqis will vote to end the U.S. occupation. This would clear the way for the Iraqi government to negotiate the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

A referendum in Iraq will greatly increase support for withdrawal in the United States. In a little-noticed poll (Program on International Policy Attitudes, November 2006) two-thirds of Republicans said they would support a one-year withdrawal of all U.S. troops if the Iraqi people ask us to do so. Support for withdrawal among Democrats and independents increased by more than 20 percent under these conditions. Because of this increased support, withdrawal will happen sooner rather than later, and completely rather than partially.

A U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in response to such a democratic vote will be a major step toward peace and reconciliation in Iraq. By providing a democratic alternative to violence, it will greatly reduce support for terrorist groups and the threat of terrorism against the United States, and make troop withdrawal safer. If widespread anti-war ballot measures are approved in the United States, and the Iraqi people support withdrawal in a national referendum there, this will be the first time that the people of an occupied country and the people of the occupying power will have voted together to end a war.

We urgently need to transform majority public support for peace into an inescapable mandate to end the war. By involving as many people as possible in taking action for peace, in

the United States, in Iraq, and internationally, we can create a democratic and nonviolent solution to the Iraq War. Our time for change, our time to end this war, has come.

“We are faced with the fact, my friends, that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. . . . There is such a thing as being too late.”

-- Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam,” speech at inaugural meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned, Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967

I/we support the Iraq Initiatives Project’s strategy of direct democracy to end the war, and urge others to join this campaign.

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