

US Senate votes 100-0 for \$70 billion more in war spending

The Editorial Board
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The unanimous vote by the US Senate on Friday to approve the Bush administration's request for an additional \$70 billion to finance the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrates a basic truth of American politics: the Democratic Party, no less than the Republicans, is a party of imperialist militarism and war.

Not a single senator of either party missed the opportunity to demonstrate his or her support for the bloody interventions in the Middle East and Central Asia. This vote rips asunder the miserable attempts of a section of the Democratic Party to posture as "critics" of the Iraq war. It demonstrates that behind the quibbling over tactics and complaints about the incompetence of the Bush administration's conduct of the war, the Democrats remain committed to violently suppressing the resistance of the Iraqi people to the US occupation and Washington's drive to seize the country's oil resources.

The vote shows that a Democratic victory in the November mid-term elections will in no way alter the basic course of US foreign policy—whether in Iraq or Afghanistan, or other countries targeted for future aggression such as Iran and Syria.

In its report on the Senate vote, the Associated Press noted that the war funding measure was passed "after minimal debate." Such is the contempt of the two corporate-controlled parties for the sentiments of the American people, who oppose the war by a wide margin.

Nothing could more clearly express the unbridgeable chasm that separates the entire political establishment from the broad mass of working people. These two parties are accountable not to the American people, but rather to a financial oligarchy. What has emerged in America, behind the increasingly threadbare trappings of democracy, is a plutocracy.

As for the Iraqi people, the Associated Press reported one day before the Senate vote the results of two polls that show overwhelming opposition to the US military occupation. A poll conducted by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes reported that 60 percent of

Iraqis approve the attacks on US-led forces and almost 80 percent say the US military provokes more violence in Iraq than it prevents.

The US State Department's own poll, according to the AP, found that two thirds of Iraqis in Baghdad favor an immediate withdrawal of US forces.

There can be little wonder on either score. More than 2,700 American soldiers have been killed, and tens of thousands wounded, in an unprovoked war of aggression that has taken the lives of well over 100,000 Iraqis, destroyed the country's infrastructure, and turned daily life for millions into a nightmare of violence, death, torture and repression.

This exercise in imperialist plunder has already consumed an estimated \$379 billion and continues to cost \$8 billion every month. Congress has now approved \$507 billion since 9/11 to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as other overseas military operations. By the spring of 2007 Congress will be gearing up to approve another multibillion-dollar infusion of cash to keep these wars going.

The burden for the squandering of these vast resources is being borne squarely by the working class, in the form of cuts in vital social programs and the ongoing decay of the nation's infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of workers are being laid off, their pensions and health benefits shredded, and their wages and living standards slashed while defense contractors and the corporate cronies of the Bush White House rake in record war profits and huge windfalls from the so-called "reconstruction" of Iraq.

The \$70 billion in war spending was part of a Pentagon budget totaling \$448 billion approved by the Senate—a record allocation for the US military. This compares to \$74 billion in discretionary spending proposed for the Department of Health and Human Services in Bush's fiscal year 2007 budget—a cut of \$1.5 billion. Thus the military budget is more than six times that proposed for basic social needs.

The eruption of American militarism inevitably requires the reintroduction of the military draft. There is simply no

way for the ruling elite to amass sufficient cannon fodder for its global military designs on the basis of an all-volunteer army. Plans for a revival of the draft are well advanced, and are supported by both parties.

The Senate vote on military appropriations came just one day after the Senate passed the Bush administration's bill to legalize torture and indefinite detention. Democrats guaranteed passage by agreeing in advance not to block a vote, which they could have done by staging a filibuster, which requires only 40 votes to sustain. The conjuncture of the torture bill and the war spending measure underscores that the bipartisan policy of militarism and war goes hand-in-hand with the destruction of democratic rights.

Democratic liberals, if asked, will doubtless justify their vote for war funds as a vote to "support the troops." This is a contemptible evasion. The American soldiers are themselves victims of an imperialist policy pursued not to protect the American people from terrorist attack, but rather to advance the global designs of the US corporate elite. From the outset, the war was a criminal conspiracy prepared and executed on the basis of lies.

It is now almost routine for soldiers to find that their tours of duty have been extended, compounding the danger for themselves and the hardship and anguish of their families. Only last week another 8,000 soldiers who were due to leave Iraq were told they had to stay at least until February. The only way to "support the troops" is to bring them home and put an end to the war.

The two-faced cynicism of the Democrats was summed up by the dean of liberal senators, Edward Kennedy. In the debate preceding the vote on war spending, he declared, "America is in deep trouble in Iraq. The continuing violence and death is ominous.... Militias are growing in strength and continue to operate outside the law. Death squads are rampant." He then proceeded to cast his vote to continue the bloodletting.

The Senate vote should serve as a wake-up call to those who continue to delude themselves into thinking that the Democratic Party somehow represents an alternative to the Bush administration and the Republicans. It is necessary to speak bluntly: A vote for either of the two parties of big business is a vote for war.

The only party running in the November elections that unequivocally opposes the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and advances a principled and viable strategy to put an end to militarism, the attacks on democratic rights and the assault on working class living standards is the Socialist Equality Party.

The program upon which the SEP candidates are running (see "For a socialist alternative in the 2006 US elections") calls for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all

US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. It demands that all those responsible for the invasion of Iraq be compelled to stand trial before a war crimes tribunal, and that the US government compensate the Iraqi people for the destruction and suffering it has caused, as well as the families of American soldiers killed in the war and the men and women who have been wounded.

The SEP campaign opposes all attempts to revive the draft. It advances a socialist foreign policy, based on international working class solidarity. This includes the closure of US military bases around the world, the abolition of the CIA and other agencies that sponsor coups and meddle in the affairs of other countries, and a massive expansion of aid to countries that have been devastated by American military intervention and corporate exploitation.

The SEP calls for the abolition of the so-called "Department of Defense," and with it the standing army, which poses a constant threat to democratic rights. In its place, we advocate the formation of popular militias, organized under the democratic control of the working class.

We call for a break with the Democratic Party and the building of a mass socialist movement of the working class in opposition to the two-party monopoly and the capitalist system that it defends. This is the only viable basis for a struggle against militarism and war.

We call on all those who oppose the war in Iraq and the assault on democratic rights, and who support the fight for social equality, to vote for the SEP candidates where they are standing. Study our election program and organize discussions on the program with your friends and work mates. Contact the SEP and the *World Socialist Web Site*, volunteer to participate in the SEP campaigns, and donate to our election fund. Join the SEP and help fight for a socialist alternative!



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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