

Vermont towns vote for Bush-Cheney impeachment

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On March 6 at least 38 Vermont communities at their annual town meetings passed resolutions calling for the impeachment of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Several towns voted not to take up or opposed the measure and it was blocked from being introduced by bureaucratic maneuvers in a number of others.

In Middlebury, Vermont's Republican governor, Jim Douglas, who presided over the town meeting, attempted to prevent measures calling for the impeachment of Bush and withdrawal of US troops from Iraq from being voted upon, but the sentiment of the meeting was such that he was obliged to permit the action. Both resolutions passed by voice vote. Douglas was the chairman of Bush's 2000 election committee and 2004 reelection committee in Vermont.

Impeachment resolutions were also passed in Jericho, home to Gaye Symington, Democratic speaker of the Vermont House of Representatives, who opposes the campaign, as does Vermont's congressman, Democrat Peter Welch, whose town, Hartland, also voted for the measure. In Putney, the resolution passed unanimously. Several Vermont towns had passed the resolutions in 2006.

Also on Vermont town meeting day, a tradition that dates back to the pre-revolutionary era, some 20 communities approved a resolution calling for withdrawing US troops from Iraq and treating them well once they return home. The resolution declared, "The best way to support them [the troops] is to bring each and every one of them home now and take good care of them when they get home."

The Bush impeachment measure passed in Middlebury accuses the president and vice president of violating their oath of office to "preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." The resolution asserts that Bush and Cheney "manipulated

intelligence and misled the country to justify an immoral, unjust, and unnecessary preemptive war in Iraq"; that they directed the government to engage in domestic spying without warrants; that they have "conspired to commit the torture of prisoners, in violation of the Federal Torture Act and the Geneva Convention"; that they have ordered the indefinite detention of prisoners "without legal counsel, without charges and without the opportunity to appear before a civil judicial officer to challenge the detention—all in violation of US law and the Bill of Rights."

In Calais, Vermont, where the anti-Bush resolution passed 94-22, Cynthia Johnson, 51, responded to defenders of the war, according to the Associated Press, by explaining, "I did not do it to offend anybody. It is our responsibility here, at Town Meeting, in this forum, to question the things that are happening." Tom Treece, 40, rejected the idea that opponents of Bush and the war in Iraq didn't "support" the troops: "It is not treason to question our government. This has nothing to do with the troops. It's about what the administration is doing. We all support the troops, but they are being used."

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has declared that impeachment proceedings against Bush are "off the table." Her spokesman Drew Hammill commented, "The people spoke on November 7 when they voted for a change in leadership in the House and Senate. Congress will maintain oversight of the Bush administration."

One of the organizers of the impeachment campaign, Newfane Selectboard Member Dan DeWalt, argued in a recent article: "As the criminality and unconstitutional actions of this administration went unchecked by the Republican Congress, we despaired thinking that resistance was fruitless. When the Democrats took

control on the strength of our overwhelming antiwar vote, our hopes were raised that perhaps there would be accountability. Now, as Congress fails us, we've looked to each other, discovered that we are many, and We're mad as hell."

In the days leading up to the town meetings, DeWalt toured a dozen Vermont towns in the company of antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan, several Iraq war veterans and John Nichols of the *Nation* magazine. Before a crowd of 200 people in Manchester, in southern Vermont, former Army Sgt. Adrienne Kinney "unleashed a scathing indictment of the US government, criticizing intelligence officials for their deception and the US military for their compliance with a lying government," according to the *Bennington* (Vermont) *Banner*.

"Four years ago, our sources were giving us false information," Kinney commented. "They wanted anything that they could show you to make you believe that Iraq was evil. And any one of us who questioned the veracity of the intelligence was accused of turning our backs on our mission and the military."

Addressing the current scandal over the conditions for Iraq war veterans at Walter Reed hospital in Washington, Kinney, now a psychologist for the Veterans Administration Medical Center in White River Junction, Vermont, told the audience that the number of soldiers she and her colleagues see has grown exponentially in the past year because the Department of Defense cannot keep up with the demand for space. The *Banner* quotes her as saying that "what's happening at Walter Reed is not new, and it happens everywhere."

Former Marine Cpl. Matt Howard provided a harsh picture of the US effort in Iraq. He explained that when he attempted to give out humanitarian rations to impoverished Iraqi children, "The First Sergeant in my unit put an M-16 in my face and said, 'I dare you to give out those rations.' They later ordered us to bury all our humanitarian rations."

He blamed the devastating conditions in Iraq on the American occupiers. "The hospitals are now morgues, sewage is running in the streets ... all of the basic human services are in ruins," he said. The former marine had encountered angry protests when he told the state legislature in Montpelier a few days earlier that US forces were killing women and children in Iraq. He

explained to the crowd in Manchester, "This is the truth and it's ugly, but you have to hear it because it's being done in your name. 655,000 Iraqi people have died. That's the entire population of Vermont."

The Vermont towns voting for impeachment include Bristol, Middlebury, Richmond, Newfane, Guilford, Vershire, Rochester, Westminster, Hartland, Newbury, Dummerston, Johnson, Calais, Grafton, Jericho, East Montpelier, Woodbury, Roxbury, Plainfield, Peru, Jamaica, Wilmington, Craftsbury, Greensboro, Marlboro, Townshend, Morristown, Montgomery, Putney, Tunbridge, Springfield, Sunderland, St. Johnsbury, Stannard and Burke.

The Vermont town meeting votes, which the Democratic Party will studiously ignore, certainly speak to the unpopularity of Bush and the Iraq war among broad layers of the US population.



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