

War Is Over (If They Mean It)

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Sixty-five congress members, including 60 Democrats and 5 Republicans, voted to end the occupation of Afghanistan on Wednesday. But 356 congress members, including 189 Democrats and 167 Republicans voted to keep the war going. The vote followed three hours of debate created by Congressman Dennis Kucinich's introduction of a privileged resolution.

The debate featured three leaders from three groups of congress members: the war opponents (almost all Democrats), the pro-war Democrats, and the pro-war Republicans. Given this alignment, which has existed for nearly a decade now, is there any reason for supporters of peace and justice to take heart? I think so. Here's why: If the 60 Democrats acted in good faith and would have voted the same way even if the bill had a chance of passing, or even if that could be said of only 38 of them, then we may very well see funding of the wars dry up. If the leadership includes unrelated measures in the next war funding bill (\$33 billion coming in April or May), measures that lead all the Republicans to vote No (as happened last July), then only 38 Democrats have to vote No to block the bill.

Now, there are two weak points in this plan. One is that the war funding could be brought up on its own without anything displeasing to the Republicans attached to it. But that would be the smart thing to do, so don't count on it. The moving of Guantanamo to Illinois has already been proposed for inclusion in the bill. The other weak point is that, of course, very few of the Democrats who voted Yes on Wednesday did so in good faith. Look back to July when 51 Democrats voted no on the funding when it was guaranteed to pass, and only 32 were willing to vote No when they had a chance of actually blocking the bill. Look at Congressman David Obey who voted to end the war on Wednesday and will write and shepherd the bill to fund it next month.

Yet we are in a greatly strengthened position from which to pressure 65 congress members to vote No on the next funding. They just went on record officially acting to end the war. And many of them went on video on the floor of the House speaking passionately in favor of ending the war. Constituents can now play back the videos, praise the anti-war commitments, and demand that none of these officials put our money where their mouth isn't. This whipping operation is being tracked at <http://defundwar.org>

These are the Republicans who voted to end the war in Afghanistan: Campbell, Duncan, Johnson (IL), Jones, Paul. These are the Democrats: Baldwin, Capuano, Chu, Clarke, Clay, Cleaver, Crowley, Davis (IL), DeFazio, Doyle, Edwards (MD), Ellison, Farr, Filner, Frank (MA), Grayson, Grijalva, Gutierrez, Hastings (FL), Jackson (IL), Jackson Lee (TX), Johnson E. B., Kagen, Kucinich, Larson (CT), Lee (CA), Lewis (GA), Maffei, Maloney, Markey (MA), McDermott, McGovern, Michaud, Miller George, Nadler (NY), Napolitano, Neal (MA), Obey, Olver, Payne, Pingree (ME), Polis (CO), Quigley, Rangel, Richardson, Sánchez Linda T.,

Sanchez Loretta, Schakowsky, Serrano, Speier, Stark, Stupak, Tierney, Towns, Tsongas, Velázquez, Waters, Watson, Welch, Woolsey.

A special focus on Obey would be appropriate. If he claims he wants to continue the Iraq War, he can fund that one separately. He cannot, however, claim that his vote on Wednesday was sincere while he continues to fund the war in Afghanistan. An additional special focus on Grijalva and Woolsey makes sense as well. If they want to end the war and understand it as a matter of life and death on a large scale, they must use the progressive caucus they chair to whip their colleagues to stand with them against the funding.

Whether we are able to block the funding this year or not, the central issue facing our government has been raised, and a debate has been aired. We've identified 356 congress members who need to be sent packing. And we've identified another 65 who need to demonstrate their lack of hypocrisy. I liveblogged the debate at <http://afterdowningstreet.org/afghanliveblog> and there were many highlights, including a lot of love for President Obama from a lot of Republicans, and a lot of debunking of pro-war nonsense from progressives — including some really passionate cries for peace that sounded almost, you know, like they meant it.

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