

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Last night, the United States House of Representatives passed **H.R. 2206, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007, by a vote of 221 to 205.**

Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), the Assistant to the Speaker of the House and the only congressional member from Southern California on the House Committee on Ways and Means, voted for the bill. After the vote, he entered the following statement into the Congressional Record:

“This legislation fully funds the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, provides health care to our active duty soldiers and veterans, holds the Iraqi government accountable, and continues to pressure President George W. Bush to change the course and responsibly end our military involvement in Iraq.

“The American people have spoken clearly time and again that the United States must find an end to its commitment in Iraq. Last month, Congress responded to the American people by sending President Bush a bill that required him to be accountable in his execution of the Iraq War. He responded to that legislation by vetoing it and asking for a blank check for his Iraqi misadventure. How symbolic that the president vetoes the Iraq Accountability Act on May 1, 2007, the four year anniversary of his “Mission Accomplished” speech.

“In an attempt to compromise with President Bush, the House of Representative has revised its legislation. H.R. 2206 provides over \$42 billion immediately to fund the operations and equipment needs of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“To ensure real accountability over execution of the war, the bill requires the president to submit a report to Congress by July 13 regarding the success of the Iraqi government in meeting security and political benchmarks. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and President Bush proposed these very benchmarks in January 2007. These benchmarks include provisions such as eliminating militia control of local security, disarming the militias, and enacting a bill to equitably share oil revenue among all Iraqis.

“After the submission of this report, both houses of Congress would vote on whether to release an additional \$52.8 billion for military operations and equipment in Iraq. Before such a vote, H.R. 2206 would require an important vote on an amendment to use these funds only to plan and execute a redeployment of troops from Iraq in 180 days. This is the crucial vote: will we finally change course in Iraq and represent the aspirations and the best interests of the American people?

“This legislation requires the president to confront the realities of the Iraq War and take account of the facts on the ground. Since President Bush has shown a tin ear by failing to listen to the American public’s discontent concerning the Iraq War, it is the responsibility of Congress to lead America out of this war. By sending this strong piece of legislation to the president, we are one step closer to reaching that goal.”