

In a speech delivered to the Disabled Veterans of America Conference in Atlanta on August 3, President Obama declared the fulfillment of his campaign promise of "bringing the war in Iraq to a responsible end." He reminded those in the audience that during his first days in office he set forth a transition strategy to halt the U.S. combat mission in Iraq by August 31, 2010. "And that is exactly what we are doing – as promised and on schedule."

With all due respect to the president, the long-awaited scale-back of American combat personnel in Iraq is only possible today because of the extraordinary service and sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of U.S. military personnel and their commanders.

While we all welcome the end of American combat operations in Iraq, and eagerly hope and pray for the eventual homecoming of all U.S. military stationed there, it is hard to accept Mr. Obama's boasting of reaching a goal which he was not responsible for achieving. In fact, he actually opposed the very military strategy which today makes the combat troop drawdown possible.

Three years ago, as Iraq was experiencing catastrophic levels of violence between its Sunni and Shiite populations, then-Senator Obama argued against General David H. Petraeus's plan, supported by President Bush, to bolster U.S. military strength to restore order to that country.

Senator Obama told MSNBC on January 10, 2007: "I am not persuaded that 20,000 additional troops in Iraq is going to solve the sectarian violence there. In fact, I think it will do the reverse. I think it takes pressure off the Iraqis to arrive at the sort of political accommodation that every observer believes is the ultimate solution to the problems we face there. So I am going to actively oppose the president's proposal..."

In a remarkable feat of political gymnastics, our president has catapulted himself from the role of surge naysayer to chief credit-taker for its successful outcome. In another ironic twist, the president has also welcomed the architect of the Iraq surge strategy as the new commander of American forces in Afghanistan.

While it is fine for the president to applaud our military's progress in Iraq, I hope he will take to

heart the lessons of the last three years and support our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines as they dutifully perform their missions. This is especially vital in the battle against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Last December, the president supported the deployment of an additional 30,000 troops to that country as part of a counterinsurgency strategy. Just as we did in Iraq, we must stand behind General Petraeus and our military, giving them the fullest measure of support to complete their mission.

I was dismayed to see the Democrat leadership of the U.S. House delay the passage of the urgent supplemental funding for our armed forces in order to tack on unrelated, non emergency spending. On July 27, the House finally passed a troop funding bill two months after our military commanders warned that they were exhausting their accounts and putting our personnel and operations in potential jeopardy. This is not the way to honor our military or to defend our land.

### **South Alabama Town Meetings:**

A reminder that next week I will be holding town hall meetings in all six counties of Alabama's First District. I hope each of you will take the opportunity to come out to visit with my staff and me at one of these meetings.

### **Monday, August 23**

8:30 -9:30 a.m. – Bayou La Batre City Hall

11:00 a.m.-Noon – Dauphin Island Town Hall

2:30 - 3:30 p.m. – Satsuma City Hall

4:30 - 5:30 p.m. – Semmes Community Center

**Tuesday, August 24**

9:00 – 10:00 a.m. – Chatom Community Center

11:00 a.m. – Noon – Jackson City Hall

2:30 – 3:30 p.m. – Monroeville, Old Monroe County Courthouse

**□ Wednesday, August 25**

9:00 – 10:00 a.m. – Brewton City Hall

11:00 a.m. – Noon – Flomaton City Hall

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. – Atmore Municipal Auditorium

**Thursday, August 26**

10:00 – 11:00 a.m. - Fairhope City Hall

1:00 – 2:00 p.m. – Gulf Shores City Hall

3:00 – 4:00 p.m. – Orange Beach City Hall

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.