

JUST FOREIGN POLICY

Support S. 186, for a Timetable for the Redeployment of U.S. Troops from Afghanistan, Including an End Date for Near Decade-Long War

Senator Boxer's bill would require President Obama to submit a plan to Congress for the redeployment of troops from Afghanistan, including a date for the completion of that redeployment. As the White House prepares its decision on the extent of the July troop drawdown and works to conclude a security agreement with the Afghan government, it is crucial for Senators to weigh in.

S. 186, "Safe & Responsible Redeployment of U.S. Combat Forces from Afghanistan Act of 2011" would:

- **Put the Senate on the Record in Support of Obama's Plan for a Significant Drawdown**
The White House will soon decide whether to initiate a "token" drawdown of U.S. forces or a "significant and sizable reduction", as many members of Congress have called for. Vice-President Biden said that Americans could "bet" on "a whole lot of people moving out" in July 2011 while Nancy Pelosi said she expects to see a "serious drawdown" from Afghanistan in the summer of 2011. This bill signals Senate support for the Administration's plan to execute a substantial drawdown as it faces intense pressure from some voices in the Pentagon to implement a mere "token" withdrawal. An overwhelming majority of Americans—73% of the public, including 56% of Republicans—support the withdrawal of a 'substantial number of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan this summer' (ABC/Washington Post Poll).
- **Provide Oversight by Requiring a Clear End Date for Nearly a Decade of War**
This bill does not set specific dates for the redeployment of U.S. troops. It simply requires that the "President shall submit to Congress a plan for the phased redeployment of United States combat forces from Afghanistan, to include an end date for the completion of that redeployment". While the President has previously set a goal to end combat operations by the end of 2014, he has not yet presented a plan for the pace of that redeployment or established a definite end date for completing the redeployment of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.
- **Build Momentum for a "Swift Withdrawal" of U.S. Troops from Afghanistan**
U.S. taxpayers paid \$107 billion this year for a war which has taken the lives of more than 1,500 U.S. troops and unknown thousands of Afghan civilians. Since 2001, as U.S. troop numbers have increased, casualty counts of U.S. troops and Afghan civilians have increased as well. Nearly two-thirds of Americans—including half of Republicans--say the war is not worth fighting (Washington Post). CIA Director Panetta has estimated that fewer than 100 Al Qaeda remain in the country. This February, the Democratic Party responded to growing opposition to the war by passing a resolution for "a swift withdrawal of U.S. armed forces and military contractors in Afghanistan which must include a significant and sizable reduction no later than July 2011".

Senator Boxer's bill is an updated version of last year's Feingold amendment which required a timetable for the redeployment of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. 18 Senators voted in favor of the Feingold amendment while another 162 Members of Congress—37% of the House—voted in favor of the McGovern/Jones/Obey companion legislation that also required a timetable for redeployment.