

# How We Can End the Occupation of Iraq?

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Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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President George Bush deflects criticism of his war plans by claiming that his critics have no plans of their own. Vice President Dick Cheney, meanwhile, asserts that matters of war must be left in the hands of the President (presumably no matter how brilliant your alternative plan).

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D., Ohio) has had an exit plan on his website for over three years. Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (D., Calif.) has held several hearings discussing exit plans over the past year and a half. Peace activists, including Tom Hayden, have published and promoted a variety of exit plans over the past couple of years, and have even gone so far as to meet and discuss them with members of the Iraqi Parliament.

More recently, former Senator George McGovern and William Polk have published a detailed exit plan, one that helped shape a bill introduced on January 17th by a dozen Democrats led by Woolsey. It's a comprehensive bill that lays out a plan to safely bring our troops home, end the war, reconstruct Iraq, and take care of our veterans for a change. The Woolsey bill is one of several new bills in Congress that would end the war. At least two others, sponsored by Congressmen Jim McGovern (D., Mass.) and Jerrold Nadler (D., New York) include, as does Woolsey's, a key component that shatters Cheney's vision of executive power: they cut off the funds for the war. Of course, they do so while providing for the safe return of our troops.

While the U.S. Constitution actually does not give to any branch of our government the authority to launch aggressive and endless wars against other countries, that beleaguered document does give the Congress the authority to declare war. When that authority is neglected by Congress or overrun by the White House, Congress can make use of another Constitutional power, the power of the purse. While the President might argue that he has the legal authority to continue or escalate a war once underway, even if opposed by Congress, he cannot do so if Congress denies him the necessary funding.

Of course, Congress must also provide the funding to begin a war or to do anything else whatsoever. Bob Woodward's "Plan of Attack" reports that in the summer of 2002 Bush took money appropriated by Congress for Afghanistan and other programs and, with no Congressional notification, used it to build airfields in Qatar and secretly begin a war on Iraq. According to Woodward, the amount was \$700 million; the Congressional Research Service later found it was actually \$2.5 billion.

Meanwhile, Bush was marketing his proposed (and secretly begun) war to Congress and the American public, making claims that have proven false in virtually every detail. Amazingly, four years later, Congress has yet to investigate this apparently fraudulent marketing campaign.

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the so-called WMD Commission have both done investigations and produced reports, but both were barred from addressing the central question of whether the Bush administration had presented the intelligence honestly.

There are some Democrats, newly in power, proposing to investigate this war, just as there are some proposing to cut off the funding and end it. But both groups are currently small minorities in Congress, even if they speak for the majority of Americans who oppose this war and want the truth brought to light. The only reason that even these moral leaders in Congress have begun to act on this issue is the intensity of the public pressure they are feeling. We are planning to dramatically increase that pressure on every member of the House and Senate on January 27th and 29th.

On February 15, 2003, we organized with our allies around the world the single largest day of protest in world history, a protest aimed at preventing this war before it began. While we failed to influence President Bush or the Republican Congress, our position won out in nations around the world which refused to take part in the war, and in the United Nations which refused to sanction it. Had our government been more democratic, more open to the concerns of its citizens, this war would not have happened.

*We now have a Congress controlled by Democrats. Will they be more responsive than the Republicans? There is one way to find out. On January 27th we are organizing a massive march in Washington, D.C., followed by a day of organized citizen lobbying for peace on January 29th. We'll find out if the change of party we voted for in November changed something more than the names of committee chairs. Learn more at [www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org) [1]*

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