

Priorities: Wilson Picks Bush Fundraiser Over Iraq Vote in Congress

Misplaced Priorities: Wilson Picks Bush Fundraiser Over Iraq Vote in Congress

Instead of Doing her Job, Wilson Missed a Critical Vote on the Iraq War to Raise Special Interest Money With George Bush

2,500	American fatalities in Iraq
18,000	American wounded in Iraq
40	Months in Iraq
\$480 Billion	Amount spent in Iraq
\$375,000	Amount raised by Bush for Wilson while she missed the critical vote on Iraq

Heather Wilson said on the Iraq Debate: "So that is the choice we face as a nation and why this debate today is so important. It is a choice between resolve and retreat. For me and my family, I choose resolve."

...and then she left for a fundraiser. [Thomas.loc.gov Floor Statements, 6/15/06, The New Mexican, 6/17/06]

(Washington, D.C.) – Last month, instead of representing New Mexicans and voting in Congress on the Iraq war, Heather Wilson chose to raise special interest money with President Bush at a swanky New Mexico hotel. Wilson skipped the vote and much of the war debate when she boarded Air Force One with President Bush to fly to New Mexico.

This was not the first time she was conflicted on this critical issue. Initially, Wilson was opposed to the war in Iraq, but changed her mind and voted for it. More than three years have passed in Iraq and with no evidence of weapons of mass destruction, Wilson is again trying to straddle both sides of the issue. By praising the importance of the debate and then jetting off for a special interest fundraiser without even voting, she is showing New Mexico families just where her priorities lie.

"When it comes to Iraq and Heather Wilson, it isn't just a dangerous case of misplaced priorities. It's here today, gone tomorrow," said Bill Burton, communications director of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "First she was against the war, then she was for it. Now she praises the Iraq debate but chooses a special interest fundraiser with President Bush instead of sticking around for the vote. New Mexico families deserve better than fence-sitting from their member of Congress, which is why this November, they are going to vote for change."

FLIP: Wilson Initially Opposed the War in Iraq and Said the U.S. Should Not Use Force Unless the Country is Attacked. Wilson was initially an opponent of the war in Iraq. In late 2002, Wilson told the Albuquerque Journal, "I have not yet gotten to the point where I can support a large-scale U.S. military action against Iraq," even after Bush's speech to the UN. At the same time, Wilson opined to the Journal that the U.S. "should not use force except in response to armed attack against the United States or its allies," with minor exceptions such as Kosovo. [Albuquerque Journal, 9/13/02; Albuquerque Journal, 10/20/02]

FLOP: Wilson Voted to Authorize the President to Use Force Against Iraq. In 2002, Wilson voted to allow the president to use the military "against the continuing threat" posed by the Iraqi regime. The resolution authorized Mr. Bush to use the armed forces "as he determines to be necessary and appropriate" to defend the nation against "the continuing threat posed by Iraq," and to enforce "all relevant" United Nations Security Council resolutions on Iraq. It required him to report to Congress within 48 hours of any military action. The resolution encouraged the president to try to work through the United Nations before acting alone thought it left him with broad latitude. The resolution passed, 296-133. [HJR 114, Vote #455, 10/10/02; New York Times, 10/11/02]

Why? Wilson Said She Voted for the War Because of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Saddam Hussein. In 2002, Wilson said in a statement, "I am voting to authorize the use of force against Iraq because it possesses and is further developing weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver those weapons and because I believe that Iraq intends to use those weapons against Americans..." [Albuquerque Journal, 10/9/02]

Wilson Missed the Vote on the Iraq Resolution for Bush Fundraiser. The vote was for a resolution endorsing President Bush's Iraq policy while declaring that the United States will prevail in the war against terrorism. The resolution also takes a stand against setting withdrawal dates. The resolution was written entirely by the GOP and Democrats were barred from proposing an alternative. Many Democrats felt the resolution unfair because it conjoined non-controversial measures, such as declaring support for the ongoing Global War on Terror, with controversial measures, such as joining the War in Iraq to the War on Terror. [CQ Today, 6/16/06; HRS861 6/16/2006 Vote# 288]

RHETORIC: Wilson Cited Specific Conditions for American Forces to "Drawn Down in Significant Numbers." In a November 2005 press release, Wilson said, "...if political and security progress continues on roughly the course we are on, American forces should be able to start being drawn down in significant numbers during the course of next year. These redeployments should be based on conditions in the field. As the Iraqis stand up, we can stand down. [Rep. Heather Wilson, Press Release, 11/18/05]

REALITY: Wilson Voted Against Setting Benchmarks for Success in Iraq and Allowing U.S. Troops to Return Home. In 2005, Wilson voted against an effort to require President Bush to submit a plan for success in Iraq, supply the military with adequate equipment and other resources to complete their mission, and provide veterans with adequate health care services. Had the plan passed, it would have required the president to outline benchmarks for success in Iraq - including the adoption of a constitution, free and fair elections, and a plan for economic development - that could be used to determine when Iraq is sufficiently stable to allow for the return home of American soldiers. The motion also noted that the lack of a clear strategy for success in Iraq could undermine the morale of U.S. troops. The proposal was rejected, 203-227. [HR 2601, Vote #398, 7/20/05; Rep. Menendez Press Release, 7/20

Wilson Voted For \$87 Billion For War and Reconstruction. In 2003, Wilson voted to authorize over \$87 billion in taxpayer dollars for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and Iraqi reconstruction efforts even though that amount is more than double what the U.S. spends on homeland security. Additionally, \$87 billion is more than the combined total of all state budget deficits in the United States and is enough to pay the 2.9 million people who have lost their jobs since President Bush took office \$30,000 each. [HR 3289, Vote #601, 10/31/03; Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov; Washington Post, 9/25/03; Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, "State Budget Deficits For Fiscal Year 2004 Are Huge And Growing," 1/23/03]

- The War in Iraq Will Cost New Mexican Taxpayers Nearly \$300 Million in Tax Dollars. According to a 2003 report, the \$87 billion in additional war spending will cost New Mexico's taxpayers \$292.3 million. If that money were spent on other priorities in New Mexico, it could pay for \$132.6 million for school construction, resulting in 3,180 new jobs; 401 new affordable housing units, creating 983 new jobs; \$50.4 million for local and state roads and bridges, creating 1,761 new jobs; 1,527 new firefighters; and health care coverage for 5,546 people. [National Priorities Project, "Invading and Occupying Iraq: The Impact on New Mexico," Volume 6, Issue 4, 2003]

Wilson Voted Against Accounting For Billions Of Taxpayer Dollars Spent On Iraq. In 2005, Wilson voted against an amendment to provide \$5 million to establish a select committee to investigate reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, including contracting procedures, protection against money laundering, and the allocation of contracts to foreign companies and small businesses. In October 2004, the International Advisory and Monitoring Board released an audit of the Bush Administration's management of Iraqi oil proceeds and other funds in the Development Fund for Iraq. Problems found involved hundreds of millions of dollars, numerous sole source contracts and missing and nonexistent contract files. [HR 1268, Vote #72, 3/15/05; Committee on Government Reform/Minority Staff, [www.democrats.reform.house.gov](http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov)]

RHETORIC: Wilson Claimed the Abu Ghraib Prisoner Abuse Should Be Discussed in the Open. Wilson said it is important for the others to see how the world deals with abuse. In May 2004, Wilson said, "I think it is important for the world to see how America deals with allegations of abuse and mistreatment. We don't sweep it under the rug. We not only have to do what's right, but we need to be seen doing it." [Albuquerque Journal, 5/22/04]

REALITY: Wilson Voted Against Establishing a Committee to Investigate Abuse of Abu Ghraib Prisoners. In 2004, Wilson voted against establishing a select committee to investigate the treatment of detainees in the global war on terrorism, including all allegations of abuse of Iraqi prisoners. [HR 4200, Vote #205, 5/20/04; CQ Vote Report #205, 5/20/04]

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