

The War in Iraq - A Local Issue

On Town meeting day in March, 51 towns throughout Vermont will consider a resolution concerning the use of the Vermont National Guard in Iraq. This is part of a statewide effort to raise discussion about our war in Iraq and the deployments of our fellow citizens in that war.

*Guard & Reserves make up
40% of the U.S. forces in Iraq*

The campaign to get this resolution on Town Meeting agendas was initiated in November '04 as a response to large-scale Guard deployments. Partners in this campaign include Green Mountain Veterans for Peace and Military Families Speak Out.

*National Guard soldiers are dying at
rates 35% higher than other military*

The resolution reflects the belief that the war in Iraq was begun illegally, is a danger to Iraqi citizens and world peace, and has swept members of state National Guards into a war they never bargained for.

*Vermont leads the nation in
per capita deaths in Iraq*

The resolution is narrowly focused on the *local* and *feasible*, stressing our major link to the war – the women and men who are members of the Vermont National Guard.

**Attend your local
Town Meeting in March.
Make your voice heard!**

Frequently Asked Questions

- Q** Is this a resolution to support the troops, or to oppose the war?
- A** It does both. The resolution says in a nutshell:
- Because the war was started on false factual claims regarding weapons of mass destruction and a link between Iraq and 9-11, our Guard soldiers should not be deployed.
 - Members of the National Guard enlisted to serve their communities in emergencies, but now find themselves deployed overseas in a “war of choice.” The deployments are affecting families, communities, and our readiness to respond to emergencies.
- Q** Why should town meetings address this issue? How is it a local issue?
- A** The deployment of our family members, neighbors and coworkers is indeed a local issue, causing stress to our towns in numerous ways, including:
- taxing social services as families struggle to make ends meet
 - Diminishing our police and fire departments, emergency and maintenance crews, many of whom are part time Guard or Reserve and will be deployed full time
- The war is *also* a local issue because it is being waged in our names, as citizens, and with our money, as taxpayers. It is our responsibility to participate in the decisions our country makes, and town meeting is the place to begin.
- Q** Didn't Vermont National Guard soldiers know what they were getting into when they enlisted?
- A** Not necessarily. Guard members enlist to be *part-time* soldiers while remaining *full-time* citizens, employees and family members. They chose the Guard over other branches, in part, because they wanted to serve their local community and their state. They expect to be deployed in emergencies such as fires, floods and ice storms, and understand that they may be deployed full time “to repel invasion, suppress [domestic] insurrection and uphold the laws” (U.S. Constitution). This is not the case in the Iraq war.

- Q** Does Vermont have the power to refuse deployment of its state National Guard?
- A** Not any more. Congress steadily took away state powers during the Twentieth Century, removing the last powers with a 1986 law. We now need to restore the balance that existed historically between state and federal powers over the Guard. To get that process started, states should take advantage of a narrow exception to the 1986 law, granting governors the power not to agree to some federal requests where readiness to respond to emergencies would be compromised in their state. Activating this exception would be a positive step and would magnify the chances of moving Congress to the next step: Giving governors the power to say no to deployments for wars of choice – wars that are not undertaken to defend the nation but for other policy ends.
- Q** What will be accomplished by my town approving this resolution?
- A** The resolution asks that:
- The Vermont Legislature form a commission to hear testimony and collect information on the effect of Guard deployments. This will continue the dialogue begun on town meeting day, and will allow more guard families to be heard. The findings of this commission could be a first step toward Vermont's refusal to deploy more Guard units.
 - Our Congressional representative and Senators to work to restore Vermont's right to limit or refuse deployments.
 - And finally, it expresses the sentiment that *all* troops ought to be withdrawn from Iraq.

Military Families Speak Out:

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