

Oberstar Democracy Project



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Oberstar Reacts to Petraeus Testimony

Congressman Jim Oberstar reacted strongly to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker's report on the situation in Iraq. "The surge included an increase of 20,000 to 30,000 troops," Oberstar said in an interview last month, "but also a 50% increase in US casualties and a similar increase in civilian casualties. The culmination of these two reports in the context of other evaluations of our situation concludes that the US needs to be drawing down our troops." In addition to the Petraeus and Crocker reports, Oberstar says we have to look at the findings of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the National Intelligence Estimate to give us an accurate and balanced picture of the situation in Iraq.

Of the 18 benchmarks the Bush administration set to gauge progress in Iraq, 15 remain unmet.

Oberstar is one of 70 Members of Congress who signed a letter notifying President Bush that they will only support appropriating additional funds for US military operations in Iraq for the protection and safe redeployment of US troops out of Iraq. "We owe our troops continued support while they're carrying on this mission, but we owe them the message that their mission is coming to an end."

"It appears to me that this Bush Administration is going down the same road that Richard Nixon followed in Vietnam: seven more years, 20,000 more deaths, and a long protracted departure that resulted in pain inflicted on both the Vietnamese population and US forces... Left to themselves [the Iraqis] will have to figure it out within their system, context, within their mix of religions - the way they see government functioning, not the way we operate our government," Oberstar said.

"The bush Administration vary naively thought that we were going to have a military intervention, establish a civilian government, and set this government on the course of a functional democracy as we've had it in the US for 230 years. That was an impossible mission. Our democracy has evolved since 1066. It's taken us nearly 1000 years to develop the constitutional system we enjoy. [Our presence in Iraq] simply is not working and we need to bring our troops home."



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Congressman Jim Oberstar in his reaction to the Petraeus Testimony

Oberstar Holds Hearings on Structurally Deficient Bridges in US, Proposes Bridge Initiative

Earlier last month, Congressman Oberstar held a hearing on fixing the nation's structurally deficient bridges. He used his opening to promote his National Highway System Bridge Reconstruction Initiative to provide funding to states to repair and replace structurally deficient bridges. "Addressing the needs of bridges on the NHS is critical to public safety, regional and national mobility and economic competitiveness," Oberstar said last month. "It demands a national response."

According to the US Department of Transportation, there are more than 73,000 bridges in the US given the designation Structurally Deficient.

In his opening statement, Oberstar said that "the tragic collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis demonstrates the need to make a commitment to invest in the maintenance and major reconstruction our nation's infrastructure. Many facilities are being stretched to the limit of their design life and beyond."

Oberstar's initiative has four components: raise the standards for bridge inspections, increase training, and provide new technologies for bridge inspectors; create a trust fund to finance the repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of deteriorating bridges; distribute funding on the basis of safety and need—with no earmarks allowed; and

create a dedicated revenue stream to keep that trust fund solvent.

"While the terrible events of August 1, 2007, have served as a wake-up call for many policymakers and leaders around the country, others have failed to understand the lessons to be learned from this tragedy. Sometimes, political leaders have to make hard choices, and some of those choices involve funding priorities. We have an opportunity to lead and to make a commitment to upgrading our infrastructure so that events like this will not occur again," Oberstar said.



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Congressman Jim Oberstar in his House Hearing on Structurally Deficient Bridges

Oberstar Announces Northstar Commuter Grant

The Northstar commuter line is one step closer to a reality in Minnesota after Congressman Jim Oberstar announced \$5.6 million in federal grants, awarded to the Northstar Corridor Rail Project, to secure an easement from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to permit the commuter trains to travel on Burlington's tracks between Minneapolis and Big Lake.

"This will ease traffic congestion on I-94 and Highway 10," said Oberstar. "Commuter rail, bus transit, and even bike

paths are all part of the solution to the problem of congestion. We can take cars off the highways and make traffic move more efficiently."

The Department of Transportation is in the final stages of reviewing the Northstar Commuter Rail Project's request for matching federal funds. If the request is approved, the federal government will contribute another \$160 million to the project. A final decision on that grant request will be made later this fall. "The project has cleared most of the

preliminary hurdles. I am optimistic that the grant will be approved," said Oberstar.

When it is completed the commuter trains will be able to move as many as six thousand people a day during the morning rush hour commute. The trains will travel at speeds of up to 79 miles per hour making the 41 mile commute to from Big Lake to Minneapolis in just 40 minutes. The Northstar line is expected to begin operation in late 2009.

Jim Oberstar

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for minnesota

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Volunteering

Traveling around MN to support Democrats

Placing a lawn sign in my yard

Writing a letter to the editor

Using my name and testimonial

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