

Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives September 18, 2002 War is a Political Mistake Mr. Speaker, I have for years advocated a moral and constitutional approach to our foreign policy. This has been done in the sincerest belief that a policy of peace, trade, and friendship with all nations is far superior in all respects to a policy of war, protectionism, and confrontation. But in the Congress I find, with regards to foreign affairs, no interest in following the precepts of the Constitution and the advice of our early Presidents. Interventionism, internationalism, inflationism, protectionism, jingoism, and bellicosity are much more popular in our nation's capital than a policy of restraint. I have heard all the arguments on why we must immediately invade and occupy Iraq and have observed that there are only a few hardy souls left in the Congress who are trying to stop this needless, senseless, and dangerous war. They have adequately refuted every one of the excuses for this war of aggression; but, obviously, either no one listens, or the unspoken motives for this invasion silence those tempted to dissent. But the tragic and most irresponsible excuse for the war rhetoric is now emerging in the political discourse. We now hear rumblings that the vote is all about politics, the November elections, and the control of the U.S. Congress, that is, the main concern is political power. Can one imagine delaying the declaration of war against Japan after Pearl Harbor for political reasons? Or can one imagine forcing a vote on the issue of war before an election for political gain? Can anyone believe there are those who would foment war rhetoric for political gain at the expense of those who are called to fight and might even die if the war does not go as planned?

I do not want to believe it is possible, but rumors are rampant that looking weak on the war issue is considered to be unpatriotic and a risky political position to take before the November elections. Taking pleasure in the fact that this might place many politicians in a difficult position is a sobering thought indeed. There is a bit of irony over all of this political posturing on a vote to condone a war of aggression and force some Members into a tough vote. Guess what, contrary to conventional wisdom, war is never politically beneficial to the politicians who promote it. Presidents Wilson and Roosevelt were reelected by promising to stay out of war. Remember, the party in power during the Korean War was routed in 1952 by a general who promised to stop the bloodshed. Vietnam, which started with overwhelming support and hype and jingoistic fervor, ended President Johnson's political career in disgrace and humiliation. The most significant plight on the short term of President Kennedy was his effort at regime change in Cuba and the fate he met at the Bay of Pigs. Even Persian Gulf War I, thought at the time to be a tremendous victory, with its aftermath still lingering, did not serve President Bush, Sr.'s reelection efforts in 1992. War is not politically beneficial for two reasons: innocent people die, and the economy is always damaged. These two things, after the dust settles from the hype and the propaganda, always make the people unhappy. The euphoria associated with the dreams of grandiose and painless victories is replaced by the stark reality of death, destruction, and economic pain. Instead of euphoria, we end up with heartache as we did after the Bay of Pigs, Korea, Vietnam, Somalia, and Lebanon. Since no one wants to hear anymore of morality and constitutionality and justice, possibly some will listen to the politics of war, since that is what drives so many. A token victory at the polls this fall by using a vote on the war as a lever will be to little avail. It may not even work in the short run. Surely, history shows that war is never a winner, especially when the people who have to pay, fight, and die for it come to realize that the war was not even necessary and had nothing to do with national security or fighting for freedom, but was promoted by special interests who stood to gain from taking over a sovereign

country. Mr. Speaker, peace is always superior to war; it is also a political winner.