

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), one of the House's most outspoken critics of the U.S. invasion and subsequent military occupation of Iraq, today released the following statement regarding the Blue Dog Coalition's refusal to support an expansion of education benefits for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"It is absolutely shameful that members of the Blue Dog Coalition would vote to take this country into Iraq on false intelligence and lies, repeatedly vote to fund the disastrous military occupation of that country, but choose to turn their backs on the brave members of our armed forces by refusing to support an expansion of education benefits for them when they come home. This is a slap in the face to our servicemen and women who courageously risk their lives each day in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

"How can the Blue Dog Coalition possibly say that an expansion of education benefits is too costly when their votes to spend hundreds of billions of dollars to fight in Iraq violate the same pay-as-you-go rules they claim to so deeply respect? It's an inconsistent logic that shortchanges our deserving members of the military and abandons our country's overall commitment to them. This GI bill expansion is a real investment in our country, which would produce more revenue than it costs. There is no reason that it should be 'paid for as you go' because the fact is that it would have a positive economic effect for these veterans and for our economy as a whole.

"By refusing to support a strong expansion of the GI bill, Blue Dog members are holding up an opportunity for the House to vote on a measure that would set a timeline for finally getting our troops out of Iraq. I strongly encourage them to reverse their position and allow a vote on the supplemental funding bill to move forward so that we can get our troops home and help pay for their college education."