

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2006

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

This weekend, the news media reported that American intelligence agencies completed a National Intelligence Estimate finding that the Iraq war has increased the danger of terrorism against the United States, spawning a new generation of Islamic radicalism.¹ According to the *New York Times*, which first reported on the intelligence estimate, the classified assessment represents “a consensus view of the 16 disparate spy services inside government” and was approved by John D. Negroponte, the director of national intelligence.² “Rather than being in retreat,” the intelligence agencies conclude, Islamic radicalism “has metastasized and spread across the globe.”³

This reported National Intelligence Estimate is an alarm bell warning that our national security is seriously off course.

The National Intelligence Estimate, as described in the press accounts, undermines numerous statements by the President and Republican congressional leaders that the invasion and occupation of Iraq have made America safer. The reality according to the intelligence agencies appears to be just the opposite. The intelligence agencies report that “rather than contributing to eventual victory in the global counterterrorism struggle, the situation in Iraq has worsened the U.S. position.”⁴ They find that “war in Iraq has made global terrorism worse by fanning Islamic radicalism and providing a training ground for lethal methods that are increasingly being exported to other countries.”⁵

The reports of the findings in the National Intelligence Estimate would seem to have extraordinary implications that deserve immediate and thorough examination by Congress. We have been at war in Iraq since 2003, and thousands of Americans have lost their lives and limbs in the conflict. Yet it now appears that all 16 of the President’s own intelligence agencies are

¹ *Spy Agencies Say Iraq War Worsens Terrorism Threat*, *New York Times* (Sept. 23, 2006).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Spy Agencies Say Iraq War Hurting U.S. Terror Fight*, *Washington Post* (Sept. 24, 2006).

⁵ *Spy Agencies Say Iraq War Fuels Terror*, *Los Angeles Times* (Sept. 24, 2006).

raising questions about whether the Administration's actions are enhancing national security or imperiling it.

Congress failed to conduct effective oversight before the war, and we are failing again now. Our role as a co-equal branch of government is to provide aggressive and independent oversight. We therefore call on you to direct the committees of jurisdiction to hold immediate oversight hearings this week and next on the new National Intelligence Estimate and its ramifications for U.S. policy.

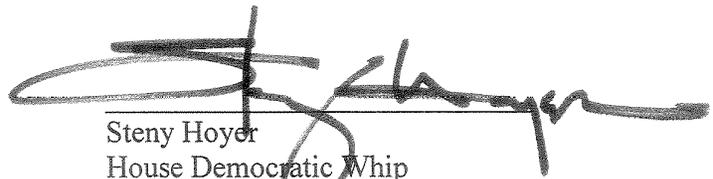
When members leave this week to return home for October, we are leaving behind crucial unfinished business. We will not have completed adopting critical recommendations from the 9/11 Commission, passing the intelligence authorization bill, or implementing full port security screening measures. The defense authorization bill, which will provide critical funding and benefits for our troops, is stalled reportedly because you are seeking to attach unrelated and divisive provisions to it. The new National Intelligence Estimate has a direct bearing on these issues. It tells us that "staying the course," as the Administration proposes, is making our nation more dangerous.

We should heed this warning and hold hearings now so that the members are in a position to enact more effective policies when Congress returns for the lame-duck session after the elections.

We hope you will consider this proposal, and we look forward to working together with you.

Sincerely,

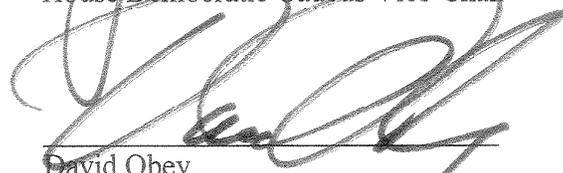

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David Obey
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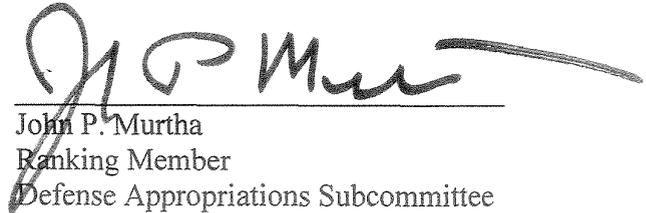
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