

"Iraq is not the first country we've tried to stabilize and rebuild. The U.S. has been involved in these kinds of missions repeatedly since the end of the Cold War. Again and again we learn that demanding our talented Armed Forces to also act as doctors, lawyers and bankers places an unfair burden on them. A civilian response corps would put the people with critical know-how and training in the right place at the right time, vastly improving our chances to successfully help rebuild a safe, stable county," said Farr.

Farr introduced his bill, the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act, with Congressman Jim Saxton (NJ-03) in the House, while Senator Richard Lugar (IN) introduced a companion version in the Senate with Senator Joseph Biden (DE). The bill authorizes a 250 person Civilian Response Readiness Corps with both Active-Duty and Reserve components overseen by the State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization.

During his State of the Union address on January 23rd, President Bush called on Congress to support a civilian response corps that "would ease the burden on the Armed Forces by allowing us to hire civilians with critical skills to serve on missions abroad when America needs them."

On February 6th, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace said during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, "if we're going to be able to prevent having to send thousands of troops, we need to be able to get folks over to be able to help with judiciary systems, be able to help with engineering, be able to help with electricity and the like, before a country devolves into a state where the terrorists can find a home."

"As the war in Iraq has made very clear, military efforts alone are not enough to stabilize a country. While we have very different opinions of the war, I join the president and military leaders who have recently called for more civilian input and actions in difficult reconstruction and stabilization operations like Iraq," added Farr.

Specifically the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act will:

* Establishment of the State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS);

* Establish a 250 person Civilian Response Readiness Corps with both Active-Duty and Reserve components. The corps would be rapidly deployed with the military for both initial assessments and operational purposes. They would be the first civilian team on the ground in post-conflict situations.

* Establish a personnel exchange program to allow civilians from other relevant federal agencies serve as part of the Corps.

* Importantly, the bill promotes a stabilization and reconstruction curriculum and the utilization of already existing programs like the Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Ca.