

Democratic Senators, Governors call for a new direction for National Guard

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

WASHINGTON - With National Guard units across America stretched to the breaking, Democratic Senators Mark Pryor and Sherrod Brown today joined Democratic Governors Association Chair Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius to bring attention to concern for America's national and homeland security.

President Bush's plan to escalate the war in Iraq is placing an especially heavy burden on states. Sending the National Guard on repeated tours through Iraq compromises states' capabilities to respond to natural disasters, terrorist acts, and other threats to public safety. America's security, and the National Guard's ability to defend the home front, depends on changing course to a tough and smart strategy that will force Iraqis to take control of their own country, redeploy our troops, and refocus our efforts on battling the very real and growing threat of terrorism.

"We expect our Guard to be there for the unexpected, and they have always done so exceptionally well," Senator Pryor said. "However, we can't expect for them to be in two places at once, or continually away from their families as they are called up for duty in Iraq and responding to natural disasters. It's taking a toll on families, and could ultimately weaken our Guard's readiness."

"Our National Guardsmen and women have put their lives on hold to serve in uniform, and they have served valiantly," said Senator Brown. "They deserve better than broken promises from the administration. On behalf of Ohio's National Guard and families, I urge the president to reconsider."

"With extended deployments overseas, governors' emergency plans are compromised, in terms of troops and equipment," Governor Sebelius said. "As Commanders-in-Chief of our National Guard, we rely on these dedicated citizen soldiers to respond to natural disasters and other threats to public safety."

The overwhelming majority of the American people, bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate, and many of President Bush's own top military leaders have said the President's escalation plan is not the right strategy. Placing an unsustainable burden on National Guard units across the country is putting the safety of the American people at risk, and Democrats are committed to holding the President accountable for change.

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