

Senate downs bipartisan Iraq policy bill

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- A bipartisan amendment to a U.S. Senate bill on Iraq war policy was narrowly defeated by Republican allies of President George Bush. Sponsored by Sens. Jim Webb, D-Va., and Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., the amendment would have guaranteed troops time at home equal to time they served in Iraq. Despite seven Republican senators bucking Bush's bid to stay the course with about 155,000 troops on open-ended deployment, the amendment fell four votes short, 56 to 41, the Washington Post reported. The Senate isn't scheduled to vote until next week on various other proposals to set a timetable for U.S. troops to leave Iraq. In the House, Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., scheduled a vote Thursday calling for a withdrawal deadline of March 31, 2008. Meanwhile, in a private party meeting on Wednesday, House Minority Leader John Boehner of Ohio referred to Senate colleagues favoring a change of course in Iraq as "wimps," The Hill reported. Boehner spokesman Brian Kennedy later downplayed the term and said Boehner's comments were not meant to trivialize the war or the senators' decisions, but rather to highlight the need to allow time for the Bush plan to work.

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