

Washington, DC - Today, Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) issued the following statement in the International Relations Full Committee Hearing on the Imminent Transfer of Sovereignty in Iraq:

"It is time for Congress to be candid about its mistakes. The Congress must be honest with the American public and our friends and allies overseas. In moving toward the transfer of sovereignty in Iraq, Congress must reclaim its oversight power and ensure the actions of our military and our administration are leading to peace and stability in this troubled region. Deferring to the Bush administration has been bad for this country and embarrassing to the House. It is time for Congress to stop rubber stamping the administration's agenda.

"It is my hope that we can learn from the horrendous acts at Abu Ghraib prison, caught in pictures and displayed around the world. Had Congress held hearings a year ago, our troops, American taxpayers, Iraq and the world would be in a better position today. This Congress could have highlighted that the real challenge facing this country was winning the peace and for this, we were unprepared.

"We are faced today with an important opportunity to seek answers to the questions about whether or not we are prepared for the transition to sovereignty, and to seek clarity on the long term costs and consequences for our country if a premature transfer occurs. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to not let this opportunity pass us by. As members of this body, it is our duty to ensure that the tough questions get asked and that we are focused on the real threat of global terror, not artificial deadlines based on political calendars.

"Congress should take this opportunity to fulfill its oversight responsibility through hearings and congressional investigations. I also propose that we open our Iraqi prisons to independent third party monitoring by the United Nations and the International Red Cross and halt using private contractors for functions that should be under the direct control and supervision of U.S. military uniformed command."