

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Earl Blumenauer (OR-03), a senior member of the House Budget and Ways and Means Committees, released the following statement regarding the President's planned announcement regarding U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan:

“In 2009, while making the case for a troop surge in Afghanistan, President Obama suggested that much of the surge would begin to come home in July of this year. Today's announcement is a start, but not enough. Retaining most of our 100,000 troops in Afghanistan is simply delaying the inevitable.

“Since the 9/11 attacks, the United States has spent \$1.3 trillion directly on war operations, almost \$500 billion in Afghanistan, with \$113 billion in the current fiscal year alone and another \$107 billion authorized for next year. This doesn't include the additional \$530 billion we'll spend on the Pentagon's base-budget this year.

“Today we find ourselves with an ill-defined objective that includes the continued risk of American lives in support of the unreliable Hamid Karzai regime. The \$480 million per month we're spending on development aid is falling victim to waste and corruption, and too little is reaching the Afghan people who desperately need it. At this point, only the Afghan people can bring about the greater security and government accountability that is needed at the local and national levels.

“Given the recent death of Osama bin Laden, our budgetary constraints and the questionable effectiveness of our nation-building efforts in Afghanistan, now is the time to begin a significant withdrawal of U.S. troops, and negotiate a truce with the least objectionable of the bad actors. Ultimately the future of that country is in the hands of its own people.”