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**Story photos: Congress stays up all night debating reducing the Iraq war. Not everyone is impressed.**

July 31, 2007

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Wow, the Democrats tried to stay up all night and force the Republicans to debate ending (or rather reducing) America's involvement in the Iraq War.

Some senators cat-napped in roll-out cots in the Capitol's corridors while their colleagues soldiered through the long night with nothing but take-out pizza and Evian water for sustenance. Straight-talkin' John McCain, no stranger to sacrifice, spoke until 4:10 a.m. and was followed by all-nighter (or early riser?) Hillary Clinton.

The honor, the glory, the sacrifice! What true patriots they all are! It really says something about the commitment our brave senators have to our troops that they would actually forgo SLEEP to prove that they really, really oppose Bush's misguided war.

Unfortunately, even as Majority Leader Harry Reid argued that a Republican filibuster (staying awake through that alone must have proven tough) denied the Democrats an "up or down" vote on the amendment, Senator Barbara Boxer, apparently knowing better than to stay up all night, convinced Reid to back off from a 3 a.m. compulsory vote to a more reasonable call to the floor at 5 a.m.

The amendment, proposed by Carl Levin, D-MI and Jack Reed, D-RI, sets a date to reduce U.S. troops from Iraq by April 30 of next year. An unspecified number of troops would remain to "counter terrorism, train Iraqi security forces and protect U.S. personnel and assets," Reid explained on Monday.

At the time of writing (I too am making the sacrifice - it is nearly midnight here), it is 5:55 a.m. in Washington, D.C. and Senator John Kerry is talking LIVE on C-SPAN 2. Presumably Levin, Reed, Boxer and the rest have gotten some shuteye and are now back on the Senate floor, perhaps with hot coffee and a fresh change of clothing.

The Senators have filled the warm Washington night with words, words and more words that echo and then fade into largely empty Senate chambers. Meanwhile, six thousand miles away, U.S. troops are on patrol, unshaven, unwashed and wondering when they themselves can get some rest. Reid spoke with macho pride of the binding language of the amendment. And yet the unspecified number of remaining troops would be the ones bound by the bill to stay and fight the Democrats' version of Iraq War Lite, which would continue indefinitely.

In an ABC News video report earlier this month, U.S. Army specialist Michael Vassell, Second Infantry Division, expressed his own frustration and fatigue: "I challenge anybody in Congress to do my rotation. They don't have to do anything, just come hang out with me and go home at the times I go home and come stay here 15 months with me."

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Vassell, whose 12-month tour of duty in Iraq was extended to 15 months, continued, "We have people in Congress with the brain of a two-year-old who don't know what they're doing. They don't experience it. I challenge the president...to ride along side me. I'll do another 15 months if he comes out here and rides along with me every day for 15 months. I'll do 15 more months. They don't even have to pay me extra."

The strain on the soldier was palpable. And let's not forget about the Iraqis – oh yes, them. In Iraq day turns to night, and night to day. Sometimes there is water, sometimes not. Sometimes there is food, sometimes not. Sometimes there is medicine, and sometimes not. Sometimes there is work, gasoline, electricity, and maybe even a faint whisper of something remotely resembling security, and sometimes not.

For the Iraqis, the notion of posturing American lawmakers rolling out cots and staying up late so they can debate or filibuster or just blah-blah-blah about a war on the other side of the world in someone else's country must be another in a series of countless cruel episodes. They live in a parallel universe to the American Dream: the Iraqi Nightmare.

And how tired, how weary, how utterly shattered the Iraqi people must be as they wait and wonder when their waking nightmare will finally come to an end.

*Jon Letman*

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### [Hawai'i on Trial](#)



A grassroots movement wants to turn Hawaii back into a sovereign country. The State government is having none of it.

July 31, 2007

*Joan Conrow*

### [Statehood Reversed?](#)



What would a sovereign Hawaii look like? Who would be permitted to live there?

July 31, 2007

*jacob meade*

### [The Pink Report](#)



Last month, Mele Stokesberry, of Maui Peace Action traveled to the nation's capitol to spend a week at CodePink House, epicenter of CodePink Alert Women for Peace. The following is one of several updates she wrote from the CodePink House.

July 31, 2007

*Mele Stokesberry*

### [Feed the burn: counties push incineration over recycling](#)



July 31, 2007

Patricia Tummons

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The mainstream media's Michael Moore Inferiority Complex

July 31, 2007

Ezra Klein

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**Straight Schatz: Hawaii's Political Myths**

July 31, 2007

Brian Schatz

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