

Council for a Livable World
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“The Septemberists” GOP Senators Are “Waiting for Petraeus”

Available online: <http://www.clw.org/assets/pdfs/septemberists.pdf>

Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, much of the American public, and a handful of prominent Republicans now oppose continued American military involvement in Iraq.

As support for the war evaporates, casualties mount, and benchmarks go unfulfilled, GOP senators continue to cling to this single talking point:

General David Petraeus is issuing a progress report in September and no decision can be made until then.

In order to hold GOP senators' feet to the fire - to test whether they are hiding behind words or they are genuinely willing to endorse a new strategy for Iraq - Council for a Livable World has compiled a record of The Septemberists' positions on “Waiting for Petraeus.”

Color Key

Gray

Senator already supports a new strategy

Blue

Senator explicitly stated a willingness to consider a new strategy after the September progress report

Yellow

Senator cited September as a significant date but did not commit to a new strategy

Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN)

"I thought the president should have adopted Baker-Hamilton in January, I said he should've done it in March and I think he should do it today," Alexander said last week. "And any of those three days will better than doing it in September."

Nashville City Paper, July 16, 2007

Sen. Wayne Allard (R-CO)

"As we all know, in September a complete review of Iraq policy, including a detailed assessment of the surge will be presented. I look forward to that assessment. I look forward to making the appropriate decisions based on that report. It would be disingenuous to simply discontinue the plans that our military leaders have planned and are putting into place simply for political gains."

Senate Floor, July 17, 2007

Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT)

"The Senate overwhelmingly supported the nomination of Gen. Petraeus and sent him to Iraq with a specific timeline to implement the surge. September is not that far away. I'm prepared to wait until then for the general's full report before we make any specific recommendations to the president."

Deseret News, July 10, 2007

Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond (R-MO)

"Missouri's Sen. Kit Bond, chastised colleagues for not waiting until September, when Gen. David Petraeus, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, is to report on whether the troop surge has led to progress."

Kansas City Star, July 12, 2007

Sen. Jim Bunning (R-KY)

"Many of you know the consequences of pulling out of Iraq. I know because we have talked about it. But stay strong until September when General Petraeus briefs us on the effects of the surge. Then let's all reevaluate."

Senate Floor, July 11, 2007

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)

"We've said all along let's wait until the middle of September and let's see what the report says. We got an interim report a couple of weeks ago, didn't look all that good but is that going to be the report we get in September? Who knows...But the fact is we need to give this the opportunity to work. We've just had the full complement of soldiers in theater within the last three weeks. Come September, we're going to review it again and I think the president is likely to come forward with something different, but what it will be, obviously, we don't know now."

CNN, July 18, 2007

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK)

"I think the more the American people learn about what the consequences are when we leave Iraq, the more likely they are to have a second thought about the pressure and tension they feel on this terrible situation. And as they learn what the consequences will be and also see a perspective about at least giving General Petraeus until September 15, as they hear that debate, I think minds will be changed or at least attention will be turned to it."

Senate Floor, July 24, 2007

Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME)

"I'm not optimistic," Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said of the September assessment. She spoke after attending a classified briefing at the Pentagon by Petraeus and Crocker."

AP, July 20, 2007

Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN)

"Corker has not signed on as a co-sponsor of the bill [to implement the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group], saying he's awaiting the recommendations of the military commanders in September. The Alexander-Salazar amendment is expected to get a floor vote between now and Friday morning."

Memphis Commercial Appeal, July 17, 2007

Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)

"Gen. David Petraeus ... has said to give that surge an opportunity to do its job and he will come back and report to us in September. I think we ought to give that a reasonable chance."

American Prospect, July 20, 2007

Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID)

"I would hope that this Senate...wait[s] until September in what I think will be a fair and honest and factual evaluation by General Petraeus as to the situation, the current environment and the future in Iraq. And at that time, as a United States Senator representing the State of Idaho, I am prepared to make decisions that are different than those today as it relates to our involvement in Iraq, if the facts so demonstrate it."

Senate Floor, July 17, 2007

Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID)

[Crapo] did credit the GOP critics for "helping set the stage for the evaluation in September...If the surge does not work and we don't have confidence that it's reasserting control, I think you'll see a strong push for the president and the military to develop a plan for exiting," Crapo said.

Idaho Statesman, July 11, 2007

Sen. Jim DeMint (R-SC)

"For us to be even debating a change before Sept. 15 is irresponsible government," said DeMint. "Let's give him until Sept. 15, but then we expect him to give us a way forward that's clear."

New York Times, July 11, 2007

Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-NC)

"It would be nonsensical to now vote to begin withdrawing troops without getting the scheduled September report from General Petraeus in order to gauge the progress of this strategy."

Ashville Citizen-Times, July 19, 2007

Sen. John Ensign (R-NV)

"Earlier this week, Ensign said he plans to wait until September to read Petraeus' report. Asked whether the report could change their support for the war, Ensign and Heller said they did not want to speculate about what their reactions would be."

Gannet News Service/Reno Gazette-Journal, July 12, 2007

Sen. John Enzi (R-WY)

"An assessment of military actions will be released in September. When that assessment is made by those on the ground in Iraq, I will carefully evaluate what their determinations mean for the future of America's troops serving in Iraq."

Senate Floor, July 18, 2007

Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA)

"Earlier this year, the U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed General Petraeus to carry out a new plan in Iraq. The Senate then followed up by funding that plan. General Petraeus committed to provide to the Senate an unvarnished assessment in September. I think we owe it to him and our troops in the field to listen to that assessment, and then make the necessary changes to our strategy."

Press Release, July 18, 2007

Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK)

"It is unconscionable to consider any legislation that will implement arbitrary withdrawal deadlines before the surge has been allowed time to work and before we receive Gen. Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker's progress report in September."

CQ, July 16, 2007

Sen. James Isakson (R-GA)

"But we all determined that it would be September, and the report of General Petraeus, the man we unanimously put in charge of the battle, as to whether we went forward, proceeded the way we were or changed our strategy."

Senate Floor, July 21, 2007

Sen. Jon Kyl (R-AZ)

“With this new strategy showing early indications of improvement, I believe Congress should await General Petraeus’s report in September before making judgments about what to do next.”

Press Release, July 16, 2007

Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS)

“I do think this fall we have to see some significant changes on the ground, in Baghdad and other surrounding areas,” Lott, R-Miss., told reporters. Lott declined to say what he thinks should happen if Congress does not see improvement in the security situation by then. But he said lawmakers have time before they must decide.

ABC News, May 8, 2007

Sen. Mel Martinez (R-FL)

“We know there is impatience with the war, that many lives have been lost, but now is not the time to abandon it all,” he said. “An immediate withdrawal would actually make the situation worse. We should wait until September when the report comes out, and then we should evaluate what course to take.”

Hispanic Business.com, July 12, 2007

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY)

“Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the Republican leader, made that clear Friday when he dismissed any suggestion that it could be November before a verdict is possible on the effects of the administration’s current troop increase. “September is the month we’re looking at,” he said unequivocally.

Associated Press, July 21, 2007

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

“I have committed to waiting for the September report (from Gen. Petraeus) before making a decision on my continued support for the current policy. But there are only so many times that the argument, ‘give it more time’ can be taken seriously when our partner has not demonstrated that they are committed to the process as well.”

Anchorage Daily News, July 22, 2007

Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS)

“By prior agreement, in working with General Petraeus, a majority in Congress agreed to wait until his report back to Congress this September to judge the successes and failures of the current military strategy in Iraq...However, if the situation does not improve, it may well be that following Petraeus’ candid assessment in September, we will be implementing a policy predicated more on containment than on combat intervention.”

Press Release, July 11, 2007

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL)

"By September, when General Petraeus is to make a report, I think most of the people in Congress believe, unless something extraordinary occurs, that we should be on a move to draw those surge numbers down."

Center for American Progress, May 31, 2007

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA)

"The senator said he would not speculate on how he would react to a [September] Petraeus report, noting insufficient progress after the troop surge - which Specter opposed - but conceded that change was inevitable. 'There's going to have to be a change of strategy where our troops are withdrawn from Baghdad and go to the perimeter and [be] used for training and not to be in the middle of a civil war,' Specter said. "And that would call for a reduction."

Philadelphia Inquirer, July 18, 2007

Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK)

"I'm not considering any amendments. I'm waiting for (General David) Petraeus, the September report. I don't see any reason to change (policies) right now. I think we ought to get the results of what Petraeus put into effect and get his report...I believe we set into motion a process with Petraeus and we ought to try and see if it is going to work."

Press Release, July 10, 2007

Sen. John Thune (R-SD)

"There have been some encouraging signs, but we will not see the full effect of this new strategy until General Petraeus's September report. This assessment will provide a clearer picture of how the new strategy is unfolding and what, if any, adjustments should be made."

Senate Floor Speech, July 17, 2007