

DeMint says war needs support
Senator criticizes earmark spending

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U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint told Myrtle Beach business leaders and politicians Wednesday that although he hates the war in Iraq, he thinks the Senate must continue funding troops and stay in the country until it is stable.

DeMint, R-S.C., spoke at a breakfast hosted by the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce at the Convention Center. He said legislators who are turning against the war are doing so because polls say the war is unpopular.

"Now that it's not popular and the going is tough, a lot of folks want to make it George Bush's war and say 'I told you so,'" he said.

DeMint opened by commenting on the ongoing battle in the Senate over a statement on the war in Iraq.

He criticized a resolution backed by Democrats and some Republicans that would rebuke President Bush and reject his plan to add more troops in Iraq.

"It would be like Congress, years ago during World War II, voting against the D-Day invasion after the troops were on the beach," he said.

Democrats have not been able to get the 60 votes needed to bring the statement to the floor for discussion and have said Republicans are blocking debate on the war.

At the breakfast, DeMint criticized the Democrats for not voting for a Republican-backed resolution that said the Senate supported the troops and would continue to fund the war.

"It was all about show, but I think it did a lot of damage to troop morale and will embolden our enemies for a long time," he said.

DeMint said the eyes of the world were on the United States, watching to see whether it will pull out of Iraq before the country is stable, which he said would be a catastrophe.

"I'm against the war," he said. "But it's a war I think we have to fight and finish with honor and dignity."

DeMint said he was against Congress spending money on earmarks that do not get scrutinized. He made a distinction between earmarks and money for certain local projects, such as funding for an extension of Interstate 73. That money, he said, is approved by a committee.

Tackling the issue of immigration, DeMint said he favored a strong program that would allow people to come to the United States on a temporary basis to fill seasonal jobs.

The senator is taking a tour of the state this Presidents Week while Congress is off.

He visited Aiken and Columbia on Monday, Greenville on Tuesday and had a fundraiser Tuesday night in Myrtle Beach, said spokesman Wesley Denton. Later Wednesday he was to fly to Charleston to speak at a homeland security conference.

Today he will campaign with former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who is running for president.

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