

Editorial - *War Bill Battle Lost*
Jonathan Sarrow – May 22, 2007

It looks like the Democrats caved and will present a bill to the president funding the war with essentially no conditions. I suppose there is some upside, the funding is "only" through Sept. 30. Still, I can't help but wonder at the rationale for the brinksmanship without the willingness to pull the plug, or at least make a run at a really good bluff.

In my opinion, their goose was cooked when Pelosi & Reid made their initial offer to put the timeline and benchmarks in but let Bush waive them - just a unilateral offer that essentially was a negotiation against themselves. So that just showed Bush & co. that Congressional leadership was nervous and they pounced. However, instead of stiffening and calling Bush out, the Dems just caved. I'm not a fan of the negotiating against yourself tactic - but there was still an opportunity to use it against the White House. In other words, they could have said "We made an offer and he told us to stuff it. He wants us to pass a bill that guarantees only more of the same."

The problem here is not just that the Dems looked bad - it's that they blew a golden opportunity to negotiate. They've lost all credibility, and it will take pulling the plug, I think, to get the WH to move. In the White House's eyes, what does Bush have to gain by negotiation at this point?

It is entirely possible that Joe Lieberman put the kibosh on Reid and Pelosi's efforts to attach benchmarks. No coincidence in my opinion that the Lieberman quote about the possibility of switching parties came out about the same time that the Dems caved on the bill. Joe's choice - pull the bill or you lose the Senate. However, I believe the moral choice of ending the war trumps the fear of losing a seat and power in the Senate.

Unless Republicans start to peel off from the WH, what this means is that Congress will not be able to push a bill through without Joe's approval. The Senate has essentially turned Republican for purposes of the Iraq war.

WRITE or CALL your Senator and Congressperson - tell them to NOT SUPPORT THIS BILL!

This opinion is the author's alone and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Pacific Palisades Democratic Club Board or membership.