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Lincoln: Senate Passes War Funds for Troops ***Spending Bill Also Sets Benchmarks for Iraqi Government***

Washington – U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) Thursday released the following statement upon the Senate’s passage of an emergency spending bill that includes more than \$100 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan:

“The Senate has passed legislation that includes necessary funding requested by the President for our troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, plus billions of dollars above the President’s request for their combat equipment and housing and health care needs, including mental health care and brain trauma treatment. The legislation also lays down measurable benchmarks for the Iraqi government, such as assuming control of their own security operations, containing sectarian violence, and more equitably distributing oil revenue.

“The President has repeatedly said that American forces will stand down when Iraqis stand up, but his current strategy has proven to be a disincentive for the Iraqis to make the tough decisions that need to be made toward reconciliation. As Iraq slides deeper into an increasingly violent civil war, I believe these benchmarks are critical to ending our open-ended commitment and to provide a new direction that better reflects the reality that progress ultimately lies with Iraqis taking responsibility for their own future.

“Our troops deserve a strategy that is worthy of their commitment, and I strongly believe this bill offers the necessary guidelines to bring them home safely and as soon as possible.”