

Opening Statement

Congresswoman Diane E. Watson

“Rep. Watson Testimony before Committee on the Budget”

Committee on the Budget

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210 Cannon House HOB
4:50 P.M.

Chairman Spratt and Ranking Member Ryan

thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee and address some of my top priorities as we consider the budget for Fiscal Year 2010. I have three main points I would like to cover, reforming No Child Left Behind, have Iraq pay for their own national defense, and minimize the use of the emergency supplemental to fund armed conflicts.

Implementing education policy reform is imperative to meet the intellectual needs of the 21st century. We must confront the educational debt of

disadvantaged students which has accrued over decades due to unequal access to quality teachers and resources.

The Bush Administration's 2002 No Child Left Behind Policy aimed to raise overall achievement and to close the gap for underserved students of color, those living in poverty, English as a Second Language pupils, and students with disabilities by setting test-score targets for disaggregated subgroups.

However, in practice this policy has proven to be counter-intuitive, by linking funding to performance on standardized tests. This fostered a “drill and kill” approach to teaching rather than a critical thinking approach. As a result of this policy, under performing schools were penalized by cutting their already

inadequate funding. The punitive sanctions of No Child Left Behind only increased the likelihood that the most vulnerable students will be further left behind by a system not designed to support their learning.

To empower our children with skills and confidence our educational system must have two-way accountability. This means that not only are the students and the schools accountable to the state for test performance as they are under the current No Child Left Behind paradigm, but the state and Federal Government must also be accountable to the student and the school for providing adequate and equitable resources for achievement.

We should seek higher reading, math, and science comprehension from all American students, but to do so we must provide them with quality teachers, a world-class curriculum, and equal opportunities to learn and succeed.

During the prosecution of the Iraq War, Congress and the President used the emergency supplemental to fund more than \$600 billion towards the war in Iraq. The use of this funding tactic has resulted in many cases of waste, fraud, and abuse. Recently, President Obama stated that he plans to not use the emergency supplemental and will actually budget the remainder of the war in Iraq according to the normal budgetary process. I would like the committee to strongly consider adding a section to the budget that will only allow the

use of the emergency supplemental for only up to one year after armed conflict begins, and then mandate that the normal budget process be utilized throughout the remainder of the engagement. This would prevent the type of wasteful spending we have seen in the conflict in Iraq.

Also, I would like to see the Defense budget reduced by \$90 billion dollars. The Iraqi Government has an estimated surplus of around \$90 billion. \$23.7 billion in oil proceeds are deposited in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and is audited by the United Nations, \$15.6 billion is deposited in the Central Bank of Iraq and other Iraqi banks, and the remaining \$51 billion are based on three variables, expected oil

**exports, estimated price that Iraq will get for the oil,
and Iraq's budget versus what they will actually spend.**

**Since Iraq has a surplus, I see no need for America
to continue to bear the burden of their national defense.
However, I do understand the need to fund some
reconstruction projects, considering we invaded the
country looking for weapons of mass destruction and
never found any, so we must rebuild what we destroyed,
but we do not have to continue to pay for their defense
when they can do so.**

**Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to
address the committee and I look forward to your
questions.**