

**IN MY OPINION****Caroline Porter**

# War overseas easier to ignore

Even the simplest of minds should be able to understand the fallacy of the theory that if we fight the terrorists outside our country, we will avoid loss of American lives. We have already lost 3000 lives on American soil because of our poor intelligence and screwed up immigration department. So instead of our possibly losing more American lives here, we have sent our best and brightest to foreign countries to almost guarantee the loss of life, over 2000 dead now. Add to that tens of thousands of young Americans who have been injured, many left with lifetime disabilities. Add to that the death of 100,000 Iraqis and an undetermined number of Afghans.

Consider that 17 percent of the troops returning from Iraq meet the criteria for mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a study published last year by Walter Reed Hospital. And unlike Marines sent to Viet Nam, those in Iraq are often traumatized and shipped back a few months later to be traumatized again.

We prefer to have our citizens killed far away from home, so it doesn't make us feel so bad. We aren't allowed to see the caskets arriving into this country — God forbid that our day should be ruined. While we are sending the invaluable resources of our young people out of this country to be destroyed, we are also sending our money out of the country, when it is desperately needed here.

While we have spent way over \$300 billion on the Iraq war, we have left our country unguarded and vulnerable, not following the recommendations of the bi-partisan 911 Commission, not securing our borders or ports of entry, not funding the first responders who are so vital to any terrorist attack. What is the matter with us?

Worse yet is the fact that the men and women who make the decisions to go to war have never been there. Only fourteen Congressmen have children in uniform, including three Senators. Out of 100 Senators, 31 served in active duty or the reserves and only eight saw combat. In the House, only 29 have seen combat.

As we are sending everything of value to foreign shores, we have the highest number



of children living in poverty of any of the modern, industrialized countries — 25%. Forty-four million Americans are without health insurance. The inequality between American citizens is an embarrassment: the gap between rich and poor is widening, the stark contrast in school funding causes a severe inequality of education. We aren't even organized enough to provide immediate help for the victims of hurricanes in our own country. What is the matter with us?

We can be proud of our Senator Richard Durbin, who voted against going to war in Iraq, and finally the Democrats in Congress have forced some discussion about the war and when it will end. I quote our 34<sup>th</sup> president, Dwight Eisenhower, himself a military career man of the highest order,

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed."

We are a democracy in peril. It is time for our government to regroup and start protecting the lives and ideals of Americans, instead of causing those of us overseas and here at home to be sitting ducks. And it is our responsibility as citizens to change the character of a Congress that would allow such failure to continue.