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WASHINGTON, DC—Today, U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio reintroduced a resolution calling on the president to seek authorization from Congress prior to taking any military action against Iran. DeFazio has been concerned about the issue since early 2005, when various news reports, including a report by Seymour Hersh, who won a Pulitzer Prize for uncovering the My Lai massacre, indicated that the administration was planning military action against Iran.

“When Attorney General Alberto Gonzales was White House Counsel, he came up with a novel legal theory that the president can take whatever military action he wants without getting prior authorization from Congress,” DeFazio said. “My resolution calls on the president to follow the law as set by Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution and get authorization from Congress before taking any military action against Iran. Members of the House of Representatives have been elected by their constituents to participate in major decisions like initiating military strikes against other countries, and it is an injustice to the American people to deny them that prerogative. Our founders intentionally put the responsibility for deciding whether to send our troops into battle into the hands of the Congress because they did not want the president to have the power of a king. The president claiming otherwise does not make it so.”

Currently, 17 other representatives have signed on to be original cosponsors of the bill.

DeFazio has a long record of trying to protect the war powers granted to Congress in the Constitution. He introduced his first bill to strengthen the War Powers Resolution in 1988, and has authored bills dealing with war powers on ten different occasions since then. He also cosponsored an amendment introduced by Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) that would have prohibited any of the funds made available by the 2007 Department of Defense Appropriations bill from being used to attack Iran unless the president had received authorization from Congress to do so.

DeFazio also sent a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in September urging her to engage in direct diplomacy with Iran, noting the similarities between the negotiating proposals put forth by Iran and the European Union since 2003 that could serve as the basis for a diplomatic solution. The letter can be found here: http://www.defazio.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=170&Itemid=0