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Iraq War Veterans Plant Forget-Me-Nots on Memorial Day on Federal Hill to Remember Soldiers Left Behind

***Ceremony Monday at 10:30 a.m.
under the American flag at the top of Federal Hill
overlooking Baltimore's Inner Harbor***

Baltimore — A group of Iraq War veterans marked Memorial Day on Monday, May 26, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. by planting Forget-Me-Not flowers in the shadow of the American flag that flies at the crest of Federal Hill, overlooking downtown Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

Matthew Weinstein, Progressive Maryland's Federal Issues Director, commented, "This Memorial Day we are planting Forget-Me-Nots to remind ourselves that war is about people. All too often we forget the soldiers who are on the front lines. We forget them by not addressing the hardship their service imposes on their families while they are gone. And too often we forget them when they come home and need help paying for health care and educational needs. We forget them by not fully comprehending the horror of warfare in Iraq and the high incidence of post-traumatic stress and other ailments experienced by veterans."

Anne Arundel County resident Rose Forrest, an Iraq War veteran who spent 12 months in Iraq, said, "When I first came home in 2006, I wanted to take some time to myself...I didn't want to hear, see, or read about the war. Time went by and I became anxious to learn how the Al Anbar province was faring. I found it hard to find good stories on the news, as if we had forgotten about the war in Iraq. Last night I watched stories about the economy and the election, both important issues, but when we have spent \$500 billion and lost 4,000 soldiers, Iraq should be the headliner. I hope

that as citizens plant forget-me-nots they take some time to remember our veterans, and those currently serving.” Ms. Forrest is a Senior Advisor with VoteVets.org, which unites returning veterans to support changes to U.S. policy in Iraq. She joined the organization shortly after the surge was announced and has appeared on national television news programs to provide commentary on the Iraq War and veterans’ issues.

Jim Baldrige of Veterans for Peace, another group participating in the flower-planting, is a Vietnam-era veteran who joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War after his service over three decades ago.

The number of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq has reached 4,080. 30,329 more have been wounded, and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have lost their lives. The war has cost U.S taxpayers more than \$500 billion. Joseph E. Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize-winning Columbia University economist, has estimated that the total cost of the war will ultimately exceed \$3 trillion.

Congress voted over the last two weeks on whether to continue the Iraq War and whether to provide full educational benefits to returning veterans, as in past wars. The votes took place on May 15 in the House and May 22 in the Senate. The record of how Maryland’s delegation voted appears below.

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Member	Continue funding the Iraq War (passed)	Set a deadline for bringing troops home, ban torture, no permanent US bases, allow soldiers more rest time between deployments (failed)	New GI Bill: Restore full educational benefits for returning veterans (passed)
Gilchrist	YES	YES	YES
Ruppersberger	YES	YES	YES
Sarbanes	NO	YES	YES
Wynn	NO	YES	YES
Hoyer	YES	YES	YES
Bartlett	YES	NO	NO
Cummings	NO	YES	YES
Van Hollen	NO	YES	YES
Cardin	NO	NO*	YES
Mikulski	YES	YES*	YES

* Unlike the House vote, the Senate vote was on both funding and restrictions. Some war opponents voted yes because they support the restrictions, other war opponents voted no because they oppose the funding.