

November 9, 2006 Murtha statement on run for Democratic Majority Leader position

For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C. - U.S. Rep. John Murtha released the following statement today regarding his run for Democratic Majority Leader:

Usually after elections, you hear a lot of analysts opine that Americans prefer a divided government. Maybe they do, but that does not mean they want a dysfunctional government. In fact, I've heard people say more and more frequently in recent years that they are fed up with both sides and feel there should be more than two major parties.

I believe this is because Americans expect that Republicans and Democrats will work together, not dig in their heels and refuse to work toward compromises when it is clearly urgent that we move forward to get something done.

Someone once said, "A good compromise is when nobody is happy." But I think he was a pessimist. I think the American people are optimistic that their message has been received by both Democrats and Republicans in Washington and that the new Democratic leadership they've elected will not claim a "mandate" exclusive of the minority party, but that it will sincerely work to end the gridlock as well as the partisan rhetoric. The public wants us to put aside the rancor and the preconceived notions of the other side and our differences, roll up our sleeves, and realize that we were sent here to govern, not to keep ourselves employed for the sake of our own employment. We have to GET SOMETHING DONE.

Talk is cheap, which is why, up until Iraq forced me to, I didn't do a lot of it. But empty rhetoric is expensive. It has cost America three years in a failed war at nearly three thousand lives lost and will cost us a trillion dollars by the time we can extricate ourselves from it. Empty rhetoric has cost us years of lost time in finding a solution to our dependence on foreign oil, at a price tag that is nearly impossible to guess, but surely in the hundreds of billions.

And it has cost us the loss of an institutional understanding in this body that your word is your word, that you mean what you say and say what you mean, and that there is a line of honesty, civility, statesmanship, and basic decency and respect for your fellow American that you will not cross. That the political end does not justify assassinating one's character or willfully misrepresenting or sugar-coating the facts. And that when you say you're going to do something, you don't just talk about it to give the impression you're doing something, you do it.

That is what it will take to restore the credibility of this institution in the eyes of the American people. And that is priceless. And it is what I intend to help to bring back to this institution: civility; credibility; respect for each other and the offices we hold; and, most importantly, hard work, compromise, and results. It will be difficult at times, no question, because it is not easy to compromise when you believe passionately in a position or a goal.

But like any authority figure, we have an impact on those who look to us and see in our behavior the example of what is and is not acceptable, professional, honorable, and American. We must set a new standard for leadership in this Congress because Americans are watching and so we must lead by example. That is the tone I hope to set as Majority

Leader of the United States House of Representatives.