

Butterfield: Spending on Iraq misplaced
BY WILLIAM F. WEST : The Herald-Sun
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HENDERSON -- U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield argued that the nation is drowning in the red ink of an \$8 trillion debt while being stained with the red blood of a Middle East conflict that he said is costing America \$7 billion monthly and could end up totaling more than a half trillion dollars.

But the Democrat slowed his rapid, hard-hitting speech here Monday night to make a point closer to home: The spending is depriving vital funds that could help a district already the 15th poorest in America.

Butterfield called for either delaying or repealing tax cuts made in the early part of the Bush administration because he said that benefited the nation's wealthiest people. He urged eliminating wasteful federal spending and instead diverting resources to help improve the country's quality of life.

"Just as we have declared a global war on terror, we need to establish a national war on poverty," Butterfield said, the latter echoing President Lyndon Baines Johnson's program of the mid-1960s.

If America can declare war on Iraq and spend more than \$500 billion there, "then surely we can spend that amount of money on developing hope and opportunity in rural America -- and in our nation's urban areas," he said.

"It definitely causes one to pause, to think about that," Vance County Manager Jerry Ayscue said when asked his reaction afterward, particularly about being in a region with a mass of poor people.

"I had not heard that particular statistic quoted and frankly it was somewhat surprising to me."

Lewis Edwards, a resident of Henderson, told Butterfield that the statistics cited do not include the weight of violence on the community.

"It is a nationally known fact that crime goes hand-in-hand with poverty, and we in this district, in the city of Henderson and in the county of Vance are undergoing a tremendous amount of unnecessary crime," Edwards said.

Butterfield, 58, of Wilson, represents North Carolina's 1st District, which includes part of Granville and all of Vance counties and extends into the eastern former tobacco lands of the state. He spoke here as part of his national and worldwide updates for local officials and residents.

Butterfield argued that America must do a better job training Iraqis to defend their country against insurgents, that the U.S. strategy must be one of gradually downsizing and that the U.S. must have a better diplomatic posture and image worldwide. He said he believes war could have been avoided if America had respect among her Allies and he also warned that the U.S. now runs an 80 percent chance of being hit by another Sept. 11 in a decade.

While Butterfield praised the American forces in Iraq, he also cited a terrible cost: Nearly 2,200 killed and more than 16,000 injured, with more than 7,500 unable to return to duty. He also said more than 50,000 are going to need long-term psychological care.

And he said he wants the implementation of policies curbing American consumer demand for OPEC crude, encouraging more conservation and fuel-efficient vehicles and preventing the puncturing of Alaska's pristine lands. "Oil is the main source of energy and it is going to run out -- remember that," Butterfield said. <http://herald-sun.com/granville/11-693008.html>