

**Military Families Speak Out Talking Points**  
**FUNDING THE WAR IS KILLING OUR TROOPS**  
**MAY 23, 2008**

- We are now in the sixth year of the war in Iraq. Over 4,000 U.S. troops have died as a result of this war, and over one million Iraqi children, women, and men have been killed. As long as Congress continues to give President Bush the funding he asks for, this war will continue.
- The war spending bill now being considered by Congress will, if passed, fund the war in Iraq well into 2009. Our troops, our families, and the Iraqi people cannot afford another day, let alone another year, of this illegal, immoral, and unjustifiable war.
  - Another year of war will mean at least another 500 U.S. troop deaths, and the deaths of tens of thousands more Iraqi children, women, and men.
  - Many troops are on their third, fourth, fifth, and even sixth deployments -- sending troops into combat again and again takes a terrible toll on their minds and bodies. The head of the National Institutes for Mental Health estimates that the number of suicides among veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds the number killed in action.
- The bill in front of Congress is about funding the war, not about funding our troops.
  - Not counting the money from earlier "emergency supplemental" bills, the Department of Defense has a \$481.4 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2008.
    - There is plenty of money in the DOD budget to pay and equip our troops -- to fund their medical care and their quick and safe withdrawal from Iraq. Instead, the President and the Secretary of Defense have chosen another priority: to continue the war in Iraq. And thus far, Congress has gone along with this Administration's priorities.
    - Threats to stop paying troops or to cut back on military families' support services are political moves designed to intimidate members of Congress into voting to continue funding the war in Iraq. The White House and the Pentagon are playing politics with the financial security of our troops and our families.
- As Retired General William Odom has pointed out, the U.S. occupation of Iraq is a force for instability and violence in the Middle East. Our military occupation is at the root of the violence in Iraq. It is the problem, not the solution.

**When speaking with the press or at a public event, here are some things to keep in mind:**

Your personal story as a military family is very important. Your personal story and situation can help to expose the true human toll of the war. It helps to get out the key message about how important and urgent it is for this war to end; and how important it is for more and more people across this country to speak out and take action, demanding that Congress use the power they have been given in our Constitution – the power of the purse strings -- to bring this war to and end.

**Two important phrases to remember:**

**“As a Military Family”** – Be sure to identify yourself as a military family when you speak at an event or to the press, and describe your connection to the military.

**“As a Member of Military Families Speak Out”** – If you can identify yourself as a member of Military Families Speak Out, it lets the press and the public know that your voice represents a larger number of military families who are against the war. It also lets military families not yet connected with MFSO know they are not alone and that there is an organization they can connect with. “Military Families Speak Out is made up of almost 4,000 families across the U.S. and around the world who are opposed to the war in Iraq and have a loved one serving in the U.S. military, or who has died as a result of the war in Iraq.” Feel free to give the [www.mfso.org](http://www.mfso.org) website in a speech or interview.

If you are being interviewed by the media, pick a few key points to focus on, and no matter what you are asked bring the conversation quickly back to those points.

The upcoming Presidential and Congressional elections remain front and center in the media. While MFSO takes no position on candidates (and cannot, due to our nonprofit tax exempt status), the media’s focus on the candidates/the election provides opportunities to raise issues about the war. Remember that if you are speaking for MFSO you can criticize or praise a statement or vote by an elected official, but you cannot support or oppose any candidate.

**Military Families Speak Out’s new Communications Director, Sean Donahue, is available to give MFSO members and chapters advice on reaching out to the media, help them prepare for interviews, and help you with letters to the editor, op-ed pieces, and press releases. You can reach him at [press@mfso.org](mailto:press@mfso.org) or 617-983-0710.**