

The draft. Spreading the burdens of war

This time, Rep. Charles Rangel insists, it's not a stunt, said **Michael McAuliff** in the New York *Daily News*. Two years ago, the New York Democrat introduced a bill to reinstate the military draft, and when Republicans brought it to a quick vote right before the presidential election, even Rangel ended up opposing it. His point then was strictly rhetorical: If the Army were made up of a true cross section of the American population, he was trying to say, then the Bush administration could not persist in the unpopular war in Iraq. But Rangel, now poised to become chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, says he will again propose resuming the draft, and not just to make a rhetorical point. "If we're going to challenge Iran and challenge North Korea, and then, as some people have asked, to send more troops to Iraq," Rangel said, "we can't do that without a draft."

Is that supposed to be clever? asked **Jim Wooten** in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Rangel, a longtime opponent of the war, couldn't care less about the needs of the military. As a typical liberal, he's assuming that by forcing the sons and daughters of privilege into the Army, a draft would "check America's aggressive impulses."

Politically, there is zero chance Rangel's bill will get anywhere, said **James Robbins** in *National Review Online*. Polls show that the public opposes bringing back the draft by a 2-to-1 margin, and the Pentagon is vehemently opposed to it. The all-volunteer force "has shown itself to be robust, professional, and cohesive," while an Army populated by unwilling conscripts would be plagued with morale problems. Bringing back the draft would be just, well, dumb.

Yet Rangel is undeniably right about one thing, said **Paul Campos** in the Denver *Rocky Mountain News*. "When people who decide whether the nation should go to war don't bear the costs of that decision, they are likely to overestimate the benefits of doing so." Most of today's hawks—who so glibly use the word "we" in discussing the need to wage war in Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere—"are always somewhere else when the trigger is being pulled." The people doing the fighting and the dying are from Rangel's district in Harlem, East Los Angeles barrios, and blighted farming towns in North Dakota. Let's face it: We'd already be leaving Iraq if the soldiers now dying on the streets of Baghdad were the children of hawkish pundits, ivory-tower neocons, and other rich, powerful men.