

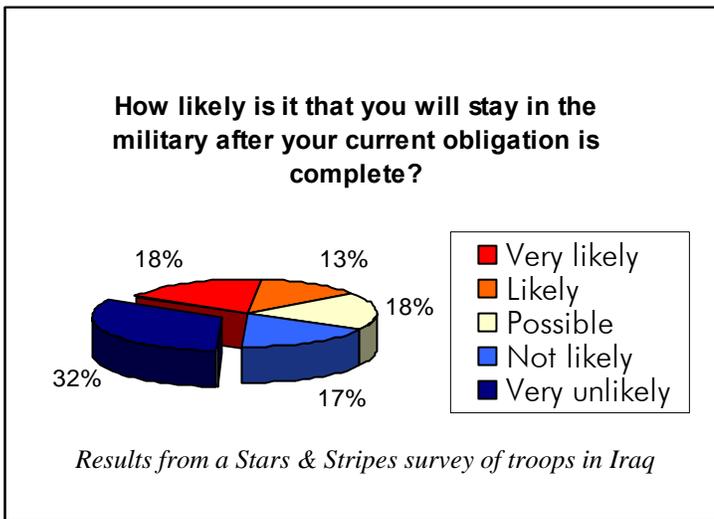


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## Troop Support: Helping on the homefront

► **Summary:** When America goes to war, we know that our men and women in the active-duty military and in the Reserves and National Guard will make tremendous sacrifices abroad, as they always have. But what about the sacrifices they and their families make at home? Though Congressional leaders applaud the heroic feats, they have provided little but empty symbolism for our troops and their families at home.

While the emotional stresses of war are the most easily identified, the financial strain on military families can be significant as well. For example, nearly a third of Guard and Reservists' families see a decrease in income when their civilian jobs – and salaries – are placed on hiatus. In many cases, the spouse at home must serve as a single parent while seeking additional work. The *Christian Science Monitor* recently profiled a woman named Isabel Raymundo who works back-to-back shifts to make up this difference. More than 300,000 members of the National Guard and Reserves have been called up over the last 2½ years – with 5,600 retired and discharged soldiers soon joining them – and 65 percent of Americans serving abroad are married.



Mrs. Raymundo, fortunately, has been able to make ends meet. But what about those whose deployments have been extended because the White House and Pentagon miscalculated post-war needs? The *Los Angeles Times* recently detailed the difficulties facing Pat Fromme's family, whose farm is now in financial jeopardy after his **six month call-up stretched into fifteen months**. What has Congress done to help? Unfortunately, very little.

In April, the House voted to allow reservists to withdraw from their Individual Retirement Accounts penalty-free. But this vote simply allows reservists to deplete their retirement savings to pay the bills, without addressing any of the real problems. Democrats have tried to provide an expanded child

tax credit to the families of active duty military personnel, but these efforts have been blocked. **Last year, House Democrats were able to extend an increase in imminent danger and family separation pay, but this year's Administration budget eliminated it.** Last year, Democrats succeeded in providing military health care (TRICARE) for National Guard and reservists, but this year's Republican budget ends this, just as the Administration opposed additional health care for reservists last year.

White House plans present additional obstacles on the homefront. A recent Administration memo makes it clear that budget cuts in 2006 will mean reduced health care services for veterans. Last year, the Administration called for **major cuts in the Impact Aid program that provides funding to school districts to help educate the children of military families**, while this year's budget does not even keep pace with inflation.

Reduced health care coverage? Administration policies that hurt veterans? Cuts in education? Legislation that won't help? Certainly sounds like our brave men and women in uniform – and their families – are facing a serious financial squeeze.

Each week, the **Middle Class Squeeze** looks at different aspects of how Bush Administration and congressional policies are failing the middle class. For more information, please call 202-225-2095 or visit [www.house.gov/georgemiller](http://www.house.gov/georgemiller).

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