

# The Oldham Era

KENTUCKY'S 2005 & 2006 BEST LARGE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER  
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McConnell's views

by Julie Nelson Satterly

With a crowd of protesters lingering at the entrance of the John Black Community Center urging him to send soldiers home, U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell shared Monday why he feels the public has turned against the Iraq war — and his views on what has to happen to ensure its success.

McConnell, R-Ky., was the guest of honor at a luncheon hosted by the Oldham County Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by East and Westbrook Construction. He was invited to discuss national issues that affect Kentuckians and to answer constituents' questions, said Deana Epperly Karem, the chamber's director.

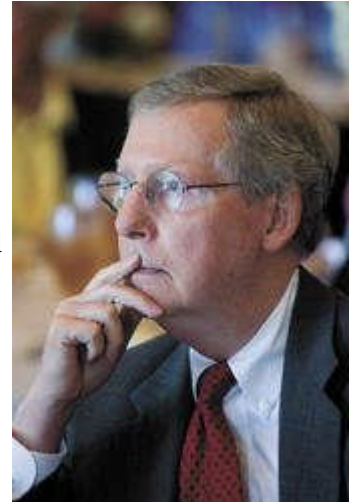
In addition to his perspective on the war, the Kentucky senator touched on his role as the senate minority leader, as well as the budget Democrats have proposed. The blueprint, he said, will support increased taxes, more unions and protectionism in terms of trade — all dangerous to America's future.

McConnell also answered a myriad of questions from the audience, ranging in topics from social security reform to immigration reform to congressional term limits.

McConnell said the public has shunned war efforts because they are concerned about the number of American casualties, and because there is the perception of inadequate progress.

He can sympathize, he said. Though he feels that the number of casualties are low compared to historical analysis, they are concerning — as is the amount of time it is taking the Iraqi government to take shape.

“I'm particularly irritated in the Iraq government, which hasn't done anything it said it



U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell listens as he is introduced by Jonathan Westbrook. Westbrook, who is a project manager for East and Westbrook Construction, was also a McConnell Scholar. The Oldham Era/John Foster

would do,” McConnell told the crowd.

As frustrating as that may be, McConnell said, the flip side is that the United States has not been attacked at home since Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorists struck the World Trade Center towers, killing thousands.

“If you think this is a mistake, trust me, it’s not a mistake,” McConnell said. “The decision to go after these guys in Afghanistan and Iraq has prevented this.”

Getting on offense with the War on Terror has been a 100 percent success story, McConnell said. The challenge is now in how to develop the Iraqi government and create a plan for the armed forces. And he supports a proposal by the Iraq Study Group to forward deploy American troops - keeping them as a buffer - in order to keep an adequate amount of pressure on al Qaida.

“Given the choice between hunkering down and taking it or getting on offense, I believe the latter is the best for protecting America,” he said.

Those standing outside the community center with signs on Ky. 393 completely disagree with McConnell’s strategy. Members of several organizations - including the Iraq Summer Campaign, Louisville Peace Action Community, Veterans for Peace and Vietnam Veterans Against the War - urged him to use his influence to bring an end to the Iraq war.

“We’re trying to send a message to Mitch McConnell that he’s out of touch with his constituency,” said Veteran for Peace member Patrick King of Shelbyville.

Staff writer John Foster contributed to this story.

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