

NOW IS THE TIME TO GET OUT OF IRAQ

reporter, I have a big problem with the concept that leaking information about illegal government activities is a greater offense than the illegal activities that we learn about in the process — from the outing of a CIA agent, to the existence of CIA secret prisons, and now to the spying on Americans. But that's where we're headed.

So we need to get out of Iraq. We need to do that NOW.

We need to remove our military men and women from harms way and let the Iraqis decide what to do with their own country. As Rep. John Murtha said today on Meet the Press, Iraq is already in a civil war, and, just like we had our civil war, at the end of their civil war, they will resolve their differences and get on with building their country. But our troops need to get out of the way.

I issue a caution here. Even if our efforts are successful, and we manage somehow to turn the political tide and actually pull out of Iraq, we can-

not let down our guard. We cannot presume that a president who claims his extensive new powers derived from being a "war president" — to spy on Americans and imprison people at will — will easily relinquish that vaulted authority.

I do not say these words lightly — We need to actively guard against the United States of America turning into a dictatorship.

My name is Jean Hay Bright, and I am a Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, for the seat now held by Olympia Snowe.

I have been saying for months now that we need to vet our candidates, to compare their world views with our own.

And now, probably more than at any time in my lifetime, we all need to vote for the America we want to live in.

That's the best, and only non-violent, way we have of saving our beautiful and wonderful United States of America.

FIND OUT MORE

Join the campaign and contribute by visiting our web site

<http://www.jeanhaybright.us>

email: info@jeanhaybright.us

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Bangor	207-735-0626	Portland	207-321-2776
Augusta	207-430-0308	Lewiston	207-376-0162
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JEAN HAY BRIGHT

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FROM A SPEECH RECOGNIZING THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY
OF THE SECOND UNITED STATES INVASION OF IRAQ
MONUMENT SQUARE, PORTLAND, MAINE

MARCH 19, 2006

My name is Jean Hay Bright and I am a Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, for the seat now held by Olympia Snowe.

We are here today on the third anniversary of the start of George W.

Bush's illegal war in Iraq. Many of us here opposed the war from the beginning, recognizing it for what it was — an illogical, irresponsible and violent diversion of the resources of our Department of Defense away from the terrorist organization that orchestrated the attacks on America on 9/11/2001.

Over the past three years, as the carnage has mounted, as the number of our good military men and women killed in Iraq has climbed past 2,300, as thousands of our idealistic and patriotic men and women in uniform have returned to these shores damaged for life, when even George W.

Bush admits that at least 30,000 Iraqis have been killed by our bombing attacks, those of us who opposed the war from the beginning have been joined in our opposition, slowly but steadily, by the majority of Americans.

Some of us came early to our opposition because we had learned the lessons of history. Those of us who grew up in the

Vietnam War era, and there are a lot of us here, learned back then to use our common sense and trust our instincts when dealing with pronouncements coming from a White House administration bent on violence in a foreign land. For those of us with that skepticism based on learned life experience, the lies of the Bush administration were transparent, or at least semi-transparent.

For instance, when I watched then-

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— Jean Hay Bright

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Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation to the United Nations Security Council in February of 2003, before the war, what I saw was bogus, vague, and conjectured information being presented about the status of the Iraqi weapons program. So I called it that — bogus, vague and conjectured — back then, publicly, in a column published in a Bangor weekly paper. I got a lot of criticism for that column.

That criticism, I believe, came from people who were not yet willing to admit that their President and politicians at the top levels of their own government, would lie to them about something as important as going to war.

Violating our Values

It takes a great deal for most people to admit that the values they grew up with were being violated by people they trusted, that politicians who had the power over our lives would not be acting in our best interests, or in the best interests of the country they were sworn to protect and to serve.

I understand that mindset. I grew up in Ohio in the 1950s and 60s, in middle America, in a working class family. My father worked in a steel mill, on the floor of that mill, not in the office suites. It was from our neighborhoods that the young men were drafted to feed the war in Vietnam.

I left Ohio the young bride of a new inductee, and saw him off to two tours of duty in Vietnam. I witnessed

the affects of that war on my then-husband and his military buddies. But it wasn't until we moved to Maine to put that war behind us, and I found myself living among of a bunch of pacifists, that the mindset I grew up with was severely challenged.

So I understand that it is inconceivable for many people that the President of the United States would attack another foreign country, one that had not attacked us, had not threatened to attack us, did not have the means to attack us.

And it was unbelievable that that President, after launching that illegal war, would declare himself to be the "War President." And from that declaration that he would claim all kinds of war powers unto himself. And that he would dismiss all kinds of international treaties as being moot as they applied to him.

Sins of the 'War President'

So for years now we have seen people declared by the President to be "enemy combatants" who have been held without access to courts or attorneys, in violation of the Geneva Conventions and our own U.S. Constitution.

We have seen pictures and read reports of torture of prisoners authorized at the highest level, to the point that the Senate had to specifically ban it. But faced with that anti-torture law, what did the President do? He issued a "presidential signing statement," exempting him and those under his

command from the force of that law.

We have learned about secret CIA prisons in foreign countries. We have witnessed President George Bush admitting that he broke the law against illegal wiretapping of American citizens, again invoking his "war president" powers to act outside the law.

And we have seen people threatened with prison or worse if they speak out against this government, in a letter to the editor or on a tee-shirt, if they expose illegal government actions, if they dare to reveal that the FBI is looking at your library or internet records.

And we're beginning to realize, collectively, that this illegal war in Iraq is more than just an ill-advised military operation in some foreign country far away. It is more, even, than a financial sink-hole, driving the country into bankruptcy while the rich keep getting their tax cuts.

We are beginning to realize that the war in Iraq is being used as the vehicle for a total disintegration of the United States of America as we know it. It is being used as a way to destroy the fabric of our lives, to destroy the cohesiveness of all the government programs that keep this country running.

I'm here to say, loudly and clearly, that Social Security is a great government program. Medicare is a great government program. National single payer health care SHOULD BE a great government program, one of our basic entitlements.

And "Entitlement" is not a dirty word. Entitlement is a declaration that a government program is a basic human necessity in a functioning democracy.

Olympia Snowe is part of the problem

What is also troubling to me is that George W. Bush is not pulling this off all by himself. He has had help all along the way, from a lot of his Republican friends and allies. I've been focusing lately on one particular Bush ally, in the form of Maine's Republican Senator Olympia Snowe.

Olympia Snowe voted to give George W. Bush the authorization to go to war, and she has voted repeatedly to fund the continuation of that war. She voted for the Patriot Act and for its reauthorization. She voted against giving Guantanamo Bay detainees habeas corpus rights to challenge their detentions in federal courts. And just this month, she joined with three other Senators to formulate a law that would make George Bush's illegal wiretapping of American citizens legal, retroactively and moving forward. And it would make it illegal for anyone to talk about the substance of any of that wiretapping.

I have a big problem with my Maine Senator Olympia Snowe actively orchestrating the violation of my first and fourth amendment rights under our great Constitution. What is going on here?

And as a former newspaper