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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
February 15, 2008

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## **Berkeley to Marines: Defend Someone Else** **by Senator Larry Craig**

President Calvin Coolidge said, “The nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten,” a warning that if we forget those who fight and defend our nation, there will be consequences. I agree wholeheartedly with his sentiment.

On January 29<sup>th</sup>, the Berkeley City Council adopted several resolutions condemning the Marine Corps Recruiting Center, indentifying the Marines as “uninvited and unwelcome intruders.” Further, the Council granted a parking space in front of the recruiting center and a free permit for protesting to the anti-military group Code Pink on Wednesday afternoons.

The actions of the Berkeley City Council provoked a nationwide uproar and debate. In Congress, legislation has been introduced to eliminate \$2 million in federal funding designated for the city of Berkeley and transfer that funding to the Marine Corps’ recruiting fund. Many speculate this threat of lost funding led the City Council to meet on February 12<sup>th</sup> to reconsider the resolutions.

While the Council did soften its statement, it did not issue an apology to our nation’s military defenders, nor did it remove the privileges it had granted Code Pink. In fact, the Council supported new language that applauds, through non-violent means, citizens who disrupt the recruiting efforts of the Marine Corps.

I do not accept this half-hearted attempt by the city of Berkeley to save itself from the consequences of its actions against our military. The City Council actively encourages citizens to interfere with the official duties of Marine Corps recruiters. The Council’s actions did not just express a political opinion, but were part of a hostile attack aimed at weakening our Armed Forces.

I’ve seen video of the “peaceful” protests being held by Code Pink at the doors to the Marine recruiting office in Berkeley. Protesters are chained together and attempt to keep both Marines and civilians from entering or exiting. It’s clear to me that the physical action by Code Pink is exactly what the members of the Berkeley City Council are “applauding.”

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Watching this reminds me of a time when our Armed Forces were not treated as the heroes they are, and I am ashamed that some have forgotten the lessons of the Vietnam era. The men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces are among the most courageous of our citizens and deserve the respect and gratitude of all Americans. Shame on those who take for granted the freedoms our military safeguards; the protestors and City Council members in Berkeley should remember that the “unwelcome” Marines protect those freedoms.

It’s incumbent on the federal government to provide for U.S. national security. When communities move beyond making or encouraging political expression to actively impeding military recruitment, the federal government can hardly remain silent. It seems to me that withdrawing federal funds from such a community and instead using those funds for Marine recruitment is a measured and appropriate response, and I will support it.

I hope that this shameful action by the Berkeley City Council will remind all Americans that the free speech we enjoy has been earned by the courage and sacrifice of Americans willing to put on a uniform and fight and die for their country, and that these heroes should be respected by all Americans.