

# Massa responds to Iraq war assessment

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**CORNING** | Eric Massa, the Democratic candidate for the 29th Congressional District, said Wednesday he disagrees with Gen. David Petraeus' assessment of the five-year war in Iraq.

Petraeus told the Senate Armed Service and Foreign Relations committees Tuesday further withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq would be ill-advised. The last of the troops deployed in 2007 are scheduled to leave Iraq in June. However, Petraeus recommended withdrawal be postponed for at least 45 days.

Massa said now is the time for U.S. troops to leave.

"It makes no sense to me to continue to maintain 140,000 American military personnel in Iraq when it's clear our presence there has very little to do with the stability of the country, the creation of a government or the stability of an economy," Massa said. "It's time to leave and frankly it's time to start that process now."

Massa said Wednesday the surge in American troops has had only temporary success in quelling sectarian violence.

"It's an Iraqi problem, not an American problem," Massa said. "If they are going to fight it out, there's nothing we can do to stop them. We can not continue to be in middle of a civil war, not when we're not protecting our own borders."

Massa also blasted the Colombian Free Trade Agreement, which President George W. Bush sent Monday to Congress for approval.

If approved by Congress, the agreement would allow the United States to send products to Colombia without paying duties of 35 percent or more.

Colombia currently sends most products to the United States duty-free.

## MASSA

Continued from 3A

"I think it's time now for all Americans with a clear voice to communicate their rejection of these agreements to the president and the decision-makers in Washington," Massa said. "We have stripped our manufacturing base and living-wage jobs. We have ignored fundamental issues with our trading partners, including human rights and rule-of-law issues. Yet we continue to push free trade agreements, and it's wrong. We need to move to a new regime of fair trade and not free trade."

U.S. Rep. John R. "Randy" Kuhl Jr., R-Hammondsport, Massa's opponent in the November election, said dropping duties will allow American companies to compete more effectively. He said agreements such as the North American and Central American free trade agreements create jobs in America.

"By removing barriers currently in place in the foreign markets, we can increase exports and create jobs right here at home," Kuhl said. "As far as the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, I am still looking it over but I know that there are absolutely no provisions that would kill jobs. In fact, more than 9,000 U.S. companies export to Colombia, of which 8,000 are small- and medium-sized firms. This agreement would create more jobs for American workers."