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## Top Democrat: Bring back the draft

**WASHINGTON (AP)** -- Americans would have to sign up for a new military draft after turning 18 if the incoming chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee has his way.

New York Democratic Rep. Charles Rangel said Sunday he sees his idea as a way to deter politicians from launching wars. He believes a draft would bolster U.S. troop levels that are currently insufficient to cover potential future action in Iran, North Korea and Iraq.

"There's no question in my mind that this president and this administration would never have invaded Iraq, especially on the flimsy evidence that was presented to the Congress, if indeed we had a draft, and members of Congress and the administration thought that their kids from their communities would be placed in harm's way," Rangel said.

Rangel, a veteran of the Korean War who has unsuccessfully sponsored legislation on conscription in the past, said he will propose a measure early next year.

In 2003, he proposed a draft covering people age 18 to 26. This year, he offered a plan to mandate military service for men and women between age 18 and 42. It went nowhere in the Republican-led Congress.

Democrats will control the House and Senate come January because of their victories in the November 7 mid-term election.

At a time when some lawmakers are urging the military to send more troops to Iraq, "I don't see how anyone can support the war and not support the draft," said Rangel.

He also proposed a draft in January 2003, before the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican who is a colonel in the U.S. Air Force Standby Reserve, said he agreed that the U.S. does not have enough people in the military.

"I think we can do this with an all-voluntary service, all-voluntary Army, Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy. And if we can't, then we'll look for some other option," said Graham, who is assigned as a reserve judge to the Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals.

Rangel and Graham appeared on "Face the Nation" on CBS.

### Polls show most Americans oppose a draft

Rangel, the next chairman of the House tax-writing committee, said he worried the military is strained by its overseas commitments.

"If we're going to challenge Iran and challenge North Korea and then, as some people have asked, to send more troops to Iraq, we can't do that without a draft," Rangel said.

He said having a draft would not necessarily mean everyone called to duty would have to serve. Instead, "young people (would) commit themselves to a couple of years in service to this great republic, whether it's our seaports, our airports, in schools, in hospitals," with a promise of educational benefits at the end of service.

Graham said he believes the all-voluntary military "represents the country pretty well in terms of ethnic makeup, economic background."

Repeated polls have shown that about seven in 10 Americans oppose reinstatement of the draft and officials say they do not expect to restart conscription.

Outgoing Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told Congress in June 2005 that "there isn't a chance in the world that the draft will be brought back."

Yet the prospect of the long global fight against terrorism and the continuing U.S. commitment to stabilizing Iraq have kept the idea in the public's mind.

The military drafted conscripts during the Civil War, both world wars and between 1948 and 1973.

The Selective Service System, an agency independent of the Defense Department, keeps an updated registry of men age 18-25 -- now about 16 million -- from which to supply untrained draftees that would supplement the professional all-volunteer armed forces.

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