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Chicago Tribune

January 16, 2003 Thursday, NORTH SPORTS FINAL EDITION

SECTION: Metro; Pg. 5; ZONE: N

LENGTH: 425 words

HEADLINE: Aldermen urge U.S. to go slow on Iraq;
Council panel backs proposal

BYLINE: By Gary Washburn, Tribune staff reporter.

BODY:

A Chicago City Council committee on Wednesday hosted what turned out to be a forum against President Bush's policy on Iraq, ultimately voting to approve a resolution opposing a pre-emptive attack "unless it is demonstrated that Iraq poses a real and imminent threat" to U.S. security.

More than a dozen speakers, including religious, government and labor leaders, voiced support for the measure; no one opposed it. After about two hours of testimony, members of the council's Committee on Human Relations overwhelmingly gave its approval. Ald. James Balcer (11th) was the only "no" vote, though he said he supported "95 percent of this resolution [and] what I heard here was very, very compelling."

The measure now goes to the full City Council, where Ald. Joe Moore (49th), one of its sponsors, said that 29 of the city's 50 aldermen either have signed on or have indicated their support.

Though some might question the importance of the council's position on a matter of international scope, Moore contended that it would have "tremendous impact."

"It will mean that Chicago is the largest city yet to weigh in on this," he said. "It will have a cumulative effect because, as more and more cities, towns and villages pass these resolutions, it is indicative of what people at the grass roots are thinking."

"People might ask why the City Council would get involved in international questions," said U.S. Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill.), one of the speakers. "The people are the decision makers," he said. "People determine what ought to be the direction, and when members of Congress hear . . . that is where we get our marching orders."

A war on Iraq would divert resources from the war on terrorism and "make us even more a pariah in the Muslim world than we are today," asserted John Roberts, a DePaul University law professor. "How can we tell Indians and Pakistanis not to attack one another when we attack a sovereign nation?"

Other speakers asserted that the cost in human life and money would be onerous.

A war "would raid the **Social Security trust** fund and cut funding to states and cities already facing budget deficits," asserted Mark Postilion, recording secretary for Local 705 of the Teamsters Union.

Balcer, a decorated Vietnam War veteran and former city liaison to veterans, said he agreed with supporters of the resolution that diplomatic efforts should be exhausted before the U.S.

goes to war. His only objection was the measure's suggestion that Iraq does not already pose an imminent threat to U.S. security.

LOAD-DATE: January 16, 2003

◀ [prev](#) Document 4 of 7 [next](#) ▶

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