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## Inglis defends vote against troop surge

**Jessica Bernstein-Wax, Washington correspondent**

WASHINGTON -- Responding to sharp criticism from his conservative base, Rep. Bob Inglis on Tuesday defended his decision to vote in favor of a nonbinding resolution disapproving of President Bush's plan to send 21,500 additional U.S. troops to Iraq.

"I certainly respect people who voted

for the surge and against the resolution," Inglis, R-S.C., said. "I came to a different conclusion, and I hope that they'll respect the fact that I think it's incumbent on a member of Congress to give their best judgment."

Inglis said "concern for the troops and wondering what ... I would want my congressman to do if I were on the ground in Iraq" prompted him to vote for the resolution, which disapproves of the increase in troops but does not require that any action be taken.

"I consciously tried to disregard the political consequences and rather put myself in the shoes of the troops," Inglis said. "The easiest thing to do is just to stay the party line. When you step out of that line, there are bullets that are whizzing by -- you might just get hit by a couple of them."

Inglis was one of 17 Republicans to break with the party's leadership in voting for the resolution Friday. The measure was approved 246-182.

While he remains skeptical of the president's plan to send more troops to Iraq, Inglis said he does not support withdrawal of troops or cutting off money for the war.

The congressman's remarks came after some angry constituents criticized what they saw as a vote against Bush and the Republican leadership during a monthly "Let's Talk" meeting at Tommy's Country Ham House in Greenville.

"I'm very disappointed in him," John Behlert, a 60-year-old Inman resident who voted for Inglis in November, said in a telephone interview. "He's a Republican, and in a time of war I feel that he should show loyalty to the Republican president." Behlert was not among the opponents at the "Let's Talk" meeting, but wrote a critical letter to the Herald-Journal.

Dave Woodard, a political science professor at Clemson University, said the political fallout of the

vote could be intense. Inglis could face a Republican challenger in the 2008 District 4 primary as well as a stronger Democratic opponent, he said.

"To win a primary, you're only talking to 15 percent of the electorate," Woodard said.

"We're talking about a very narrow activist conservative Republican base that is outraged at this vote."

Inglis will hold his monthly Spartanburg "Let's Talk" meeting next Monday at noon at Wade's Restaurant, 1000 N. Pine St. The meeting is open to the public.

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