

GOVERNMENT WATCH

# Who's Left In The Coalition?



When the U.S. invaded Iraq in the spring of 2003, we had 47,200 combat troops from three nations with us. In March 2004, there were 24,000 troops from 33 countries. Today, the number of foreign troops has dropped below 12,000, according to the Brookings Institution's Iraq Index. That includes 4500 British troops, 2000 from the former Soviet Republic of Georgia and 1200 from South Korea. Other coalition members, such as Spain, Italy and Japan, left Iraq months or years ago. By this summer, the numbers

could diminish by an additional 50%. Britain and South Korea are halving their forces, and Georgia is pulling out 1700 troops. The new prime ministers of Australia and Poland also have promised to remove all of their soldiers—600 and 900, respectively—which would leave the foreign troop strength under 6000. (Right now, the U.S. has about 160,000 troops there.) Says Brookings' Michael O'Hanlon:

**Foreign troops have shrunk by 75%**

"The military mission in Iraq is increasingly just a U.S.-Iraqi enterprise." He adds that we can expect less help as time passes, "even given improvements on the ground and a new President."

NEWSMAKERS

## Making Affordable

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Kevin Martin (r) talks with PARADE about sex, violence and cable rates.

### Have you gotten r from Americans a sex and violence c

In my first years here hundreds of complain hundreds of thousand

### So what do you pl

The FCC has standar what's appropriate a during the hours wh likely to tune in. But only applies to broad —just a slice of what

### You support a sys people pay only f they want to wat

Since 1996, cable rat than doubled, but th number of channels has increased only fr Implementing an à la is not new—it's been Canada and Hong K

### The cable industry undermine their v model. What do y

The current model is leading to the 100% While I don't think th should go in and dire rates, we need to fos competition so that have more choices a control the rates the

YOUR MONEY

## Bank-Free Loans

Today, more people are sidestepping banks and getting loans from other individuals online. In 2007, about \$86 million of these loans were financed in the U.S. The practice is called person-to-person lending or social lending, and two of the biggest websites dealing in them are *Prosper.com* and *LendingClub.com*. These loans tend to be at lower interest rates than banks and credit cards (starting at 7.5% for person-to-person vs. 13% for conventional loans). Minimum credit scores are required to borrow, and the sites run credit checks. Are these loans a worthwhile option? "Yes, if you can get a more favorable rate," says Greg McBride, senior financial analyst at *Bankrate.com*. He adds, "The loans can also be particularly valuable to people who are at or close to their existing credit limits." Remember, though, that social loans are as binding as bank loans. If you default, you'll be hounded by a collection agency, and your credit score will drop.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

## Cellphone Ban

The use of mobile phones is forbidden in many hospitals, and recently doctors' offices around the nation have begun prohibiting patients from talking on them in waiting rooms. Now some businesses are threatening to charge people who won't hang up, and one restaurant in Seattle is even billing diners \$5 for cell chatter. (It has yet to actually force anyone to pay up.) Should businesses be allowed to restrict cellphone use? Tell us at [Parade.com](http://Parade.com).

