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COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE IKE SKELTON, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable IKE SKELTON, Member of Congress:

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, September 13, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, I write to notify you formally that I have been served with a subpoena. The subpoena was issued in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California in relation to ongoing prosecutions related to former Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham and requests my testimony as a potential witness and the production of documents.

After consultation with counsel, I have determined that compliance with the subpoena may be inconsistent with the precedents and privileges of the House.

Sincerely,

IKE SKELTON,
Chairman.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE HONORABLE JERRY WELLER, MEMBER OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable JERRY WELLER, Member of Congress:

SEPTEMBER 12, 2007.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI
Speaker, House of Representatives
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: This is to notify you formally, pursuant to Rule VIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, that I have been served with a subpoena, issued in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, for testimony in a criminal case.

After consultation with the Office of General Counsel, I have determined that compliance with the subpoena is inconsistent with the precedents and privileges of the House.

Sincerely,

JERRY WELLER,
Member of Congress.

IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I am so happy to have the opportunity and the honor to rise this evening to lead the Special Order of the Congressional Black Caucus. We are going to be talking about Iraq.

I want to recognize first for comment the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, my colleague and good friend, the gentlelady from Detroit, Michigan, Congresswoman CAROLYN KILPATRICK, and to thank her for her leadership of her wonderful caucus.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, Members of the Congress and Ameri-

cans across the world, thank you. Thank you very much, Congresswoman Madam Chair STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, for accepting the responsibility for leading the Special Order. Thank you very much.

We need a new direction in America. We need a plan, one we never had 4 years, 5 months ago as this country struck a sovereign nation, Iraq. We need a plan. I would say a new plan, but we never had an old plan. So a plan is what this country must have. President Bush wants the same "no plan" to go forward. It is time for change: over 3,800 Americans dead, over 28,000 Americans wounded in battle. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, 43 members from 21 States, we represent over 40 million Americans. And to a person, all over our districts, they want a change. They want a new direction with this war in Iraq. Eighteen of our members represent less than 50 percent African Americans. Several of our members represent less than 15 percent African American. We represent the American people, almost 300 million in our country, 40 million represented by the members of our caucus. We represent Latino Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Indian Americans, and African Americans. The entire multi-ethnic society are represented by members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

So when we start our Special Order tonight to talk about the war in Iraq, a war we never should have fought, a war that has lasted longer than World War I, World War II, the Civil War, and the war continues, you might remember, America, last spring they were all saying wait until September. We sent a bill with benchmarks to the Senate, to the House, passed the House, went to the Senate. The President vetoed it. We sent him another one. They say, okay, we won't do another one; we will wait until September. Well, now General Petraeus is saying not September 2007; let's now give them until March 2008. No new plan.

They are going to ask for \$200 billion in the next several weeks. Already have spent \$565.4 trillion of your tax dollars on a war we never should have fought.

America wants a change; we want a new direction, Mr. President. We want to bring our troops home in the most orderly possible plan that we can put together. And I hope and the American people hope this administration as well as our military leaders will come up with a plan. It is your responsibility to do that.

We support our troops. We support the veterans all over this country as well as those veterans who are fighting this war. The mental health needs that our country will have as a result of this war, we yet do not know. There will be significant needs for mental health services. This supplemental has very little money that is coming through. And this is a supplemental that we spent this year, 2007 and 2008.

Understanding, again, we have already spent \$565.4 trillion. Repeat that: \$565 trillion in this war.

We must bring our troops home. We must have a new direction. And as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, we will say it over and over again: set a plan in motion. Change direction for our country.

Benchmarks. You heard also, benchmarks. What about these benchmarks that Congress, the President, and President Maliki put together earlier this year? It is really between President Bush's administration and the administration in Iraq, 18 benchmarks that they said they would meet by September. The General Accounting Office reported to this Congress last week they have met three of them. They are not sustaining their own government. They go on vacation, and they want us to fight their war.

Our people tell us to bring our soldiers home. We hear it across the country, Republicans and Democrats as well as independents: bring our troops home. It is unconscionable that this Congress would consider as an appropriator and as a Member of this body as well as a citizen of this country 200 billion new dollars for this ill-advised war in the next several months.

Rise up, America. Thank you for protesting over this last week. Keep the protests up. If you can't come to Washington, have them in your own State, in your own city. Let us hear your voices. It is too silent out there. This is a better country than that.

So as we come to you tonight as Members of this United States House of Representatives, 110th Congress, where there have been 110 African Americans elected and voting in this Chamber over these many years, we are proud to have that responsibility and we will remain the conscience of the Congress. Bring our troops home. End this ill-advised war. Rebuild America from the ground up. Our children deserve more. Our seniors who built this country need more.

There is no reason why we can't have top-quality education, good health centers, good environment, good infrastructure, bridges that don't collapse. But, you see, you can't spend \$565 trillion of your money in a war that we should not be fighting and at the same time invest in America's future.

So as one of 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, we say to you, America, become engaged. Speak out. Ask that we bring our troops home. Ask for a new plan. Ask for a change of direction. Our theme for 2007 and 2008 is change course, do something different. Join. Volunteer. Work for a better America. Confront the crisis of the war, of education, of health care, of infrastructure needs. And then for us to continue the legacy, not just members of the caucus but all Americans, continue the legacy of people who have built this country, who have laid down their lives. And, for us, so many of our ancestors and forebears who fought the

civil rights movement who speak out today for a just America.

So my brothers and sisters, American citizens, rise up, change course. Fight to end this war today so that your grandchildren will have a better America tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: One of the costs of the war in Iraq that is often overlooked is the waste of tax dollars that could be used to fund programs and facilities that would improve our quality of life. America's families want access to well-paying jobs, affordable health care, and quality education. The War in Iraq presents a threat to our military readiness and the development of communities across our country. We must reinvest in programs that address the priorities of America's families to preserve the safety, security and stability of Americans everywhere.

I was against the War in Iraq from the beginning. I will continue to stand strong for the citizens of the 13th Congressional District of Michigan and America. We must take America in a new direction. Let us work together to "Change Course, Confront Crises, and Continue the Legacy."

IT'S TIME TO CHANGE COURSE

The citizens of the 13th Congressional District of Michigan have collectively spent \$555.4 million in Iraq. For this much money, we could have provided, right here to citizens in the 13th Congressional District: 190,892 people with health care; 7,747 more elementary school teachers; 83,268 more places with Head Start; 379,635 children with health care; 4,477 more affordable housing units for working class people and senior citizens; 50 new elementary schools; 60,288 scholarships for college students; 7,670 music and arts teachers; 12,009 police officers, fire fighters and emergency medical technicians; 780,628 homes with renewable energy options; or 8,403 port container inspectors. [Progressive Congressional Caucus, 9/10/07]

IT'S TIME TO CONFRONT CRISES

On September 7, 2007, the non-partisan General Accounting Office concluded that the Iraqi government "met three, partially met four, and did not meet 11 out of 18 benchmarks. Overall, key legislation has not been passed, and it is unclear whether the Iraqi government will spend \$10 billion in reconstruction funds." [GAO-07-1230T]

As of September 10, 2007, 3,759 U.S. troops have been killed and more than 27,770 have been wounded in the Iraq war since it began in March 2003. [Department of Defense, 9/10/07]

IT'S TIME TO CONTINUE THE LEGACY

The Iraq Study Group stated that the use of the military in Iraq has passed; it is time for diplomacy to take place. Regrettably, diplomacy has not been seriously considered by the President, and internecine warfare and outright civil war has filled the vacuum of this viable option in Iraq. [Iraq Study Group, December 6, 2006].

Out of four million Iraqis who are refugees, the United States has taken in a total of 687 between April 1, 2003, and February 28, 2007. [Congressional Research Service, March 23, 2007]. 78 percent of Americans believe the U.S. should withdraw some or all of our troops from Iraq. [New York Times, 9/10/07]. 60 percent of Americans say the U.S. should set a timetable to withdraw our forces from Iraq and

should "stick to that timetable regardless of what is going on in Iraq." [USA Today, 9/10/07].

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

As of September 2007, U.S. troops have been in Iraq for four years and six months. The Revolutionary War lasted eight years and two months. The American Civil War lasted four years. The Spanish-American War lasted five months in 1898. World War I lasted four years and just under five months. The U.S. role in World War II started in December of 1941; it ended in 1945. U.S. involvement in Vietnam lasted more than a decade; until Saigon fell to North Vietnam in April 1975.

WHEN WILL ENOUGH BE ENOUGH? FUNDING A FIASCO: THE COST OF THE WAR IN IRAQ

We have spent, as Americans, more than half a billion dollars in Iraq since March 2003. The President is expected to request another \$200 billion. FY 2003—\$53 billion; FY 2004—\$75.6 billion; FY 2005—\$84.7 billion; FY 2006—\$101.7 billion; FY 2007—\$135.2 billion; FY 2008—\$116.3 billion; TOTAL—\$566.8 billion.

According to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, the U.S. spends about \$10 billion per month in Iraq. That's \$3,816 per second; \$228,938 per minute; \$329,670,330 per day, or \$2,307,692,380 per week.

IRAQ BY THE NUMBERS

Amount, in billions of dollars, that has been spent in Iraq—\$565; Amount, in billions of dollars, that the war has cost the State of Michigan—\$11.9; Number of wounded U.S. troops—27,770; Number of U.S. troops that have lost their lives—3,759; Percent of Americans who believe we should withdraw some or all of our troops from Iraq—78; Percent of Iraqis that want U.S. forces and our coalition allies to leave their country immediately—47; Years we have been at war in Iraq—4.5; Number of the 18 benchmarks the Iraqi government has met—3.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. In conjunction with what my colleague has already said, can you imagine that of the amount of money we spend in Iraq, we could put in place 4,072,709 additional housing units nationwide? In Ohio, we could put 142,849. Imagine this, right in the city of Cleveland where we have 2,185 homeless, we could take care of them and they would not have to be homeless.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to yield time to my colleague and good friend who has been at the forefront of issues around this war, the Congresswoman from California, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE. And I yield to her 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the gentlelady from Ohio, who is the Chair of our House Ethics Committee, for yielding and for her tremendous leadership on so many issues, and for her consistent, and I mean consistent, opposition to this war from day one.

Also I would like to thank the Chair of our Congressional Black Caucus, Congresswoman CAROLYN KILPATRICK, for your outstanding leadership and also for your commitment in changing the President's failed policy on Iraq and for making sure that the Congress-

ional Black Caucus speaks in one voice. Thank you, Congresswoman KILPATRICK.

Let me also salute all of our colleagues from the Congressional Black Caucus who have opposed this war from the start, including Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS who actually boldly started the Out of Iraq Caucus. If our voices had been listened to, we would not have embarked upon this unnecessary, immoral war. I once again stand here as the daughter of a 25-year veteran who fought in two wars. It is past time to end this war.

Mr. Speaker, last week the President once again took to the air waves to make his case for the same old "stay the course" strategy. He said that he will return the number of troops in Iraq to pre-surge levels by July of 2008. He wants us to believe that by getting back to where we were last January sometime next summer, he wants us to think that that is progress. The American people aren't buying that. They know how to count. It is the same song and dance from the people who told us that there were weapons of mass destruction, who assured us that we would be greeted as liberators, who declared "mission accomplished," and said really it is mission impossible but he declared mission accomplished and who said we were turning the corner and that the insurgency was in its last throes.

The fact is that the Bush "stay the course" strategy put us on the path for 10 years of occupation in Iraq at the minimum. It is time to call this what it is. It is really the President's plan to run out the clock on his failed policy, to move the goal post once again so that he could sneak out the back door and leave the American people holding the bag after he leaves the White House.

Well, let me ask you, how many of our troops should die so the President can save face? How many Iraqis must die to convince the President that the occupation is bringing disaster to hundreds of thousands of Iraqis? How much of our tax dollars should we spend so the President can avoid admitting that his policy failed? We are now spending \$12 billion a month in Iraq. For the price of 1 month in Iraq, we could be paying for 1.5 million children to go to Head Start for a year. For the price of 1 month in Iraq, we could have hired 200,000 new school teachers for a year. For the price of 1 month in Iraq, we could have insured 7 million of the 8.7 million children living in this country without medical insurance for a year. Mr. Speaker, that is just the cost of 30 days in Iraq, and the President thinks we should be staying yet another 10 years. That is far too high a price to pay for him to save face.

All the talk about military progress in Iraq is a distraction. It is a smoke screen that only serves to obscure the basic fundamental fact that there is no military solution to the situation in Iraq. Our brave troops are trapped in a

civil war and an occupation. Our continued presence there is not only challenging our military; it is undermining our national security and our efforts to fight international terrorism. That is why every member of the Congressional Black Caucus really cosponsored a resolution which we sponsored banning military bases and control, at least U.S. control, of the Iraqi oil.

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This resolution passed this body on a very large bipartisan vote, and, in fact, it sent a strong message that we do not intend to occupy Iraq, at least this House doesn't intend to have that as our policy.

Despite this administration's, though, efforts to frame this as an issue of victory and defeat, the fact remains that redeployment of United States troops from Iraq is really a precondition; it's a precondition to restoring our national security and our efforts to fight terrorism and putting us on a path toward a foreign policy that provides real solutions for global peace and security. Redeployment is a precondition, a precondition for engaging Iraq's neighbors and the international community in a regional stability plan.

We have a moral obligation to help build Iraq. We bombed the country and we, for the most part, destroyed it. But neither Iraq's neighbors nor the international community will truly engage in a regional stability plan as long as they believe that the United States intends to maintain an indefinite occupation. Redeployment is a precondition for any successful effort to combat global terrorism.

The United States' occupation of Iraq has become a rallying point for terrorist recruitment, training and fundraising, a factor that actively undermines our antiterrorism efforts.

Congress has the power to end the Bush administration's failed policy in Iraq. But it means, it really means that Members of Congress are going to have to make a choice. Are we going to stand with the President for an open-ended occupation that sacrifices our troops' lives so he can save face, or are we going to act to bring this disastrous policy to a conclusion? The choice is simple.

Congress should not provide another dime, not another dime for the President's failed policy. We should provide the money necessary to fully fund the safe, timely and responsible redeployment of troops and contractors from Iraq. And let me tell you, the American people support this.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me remind you that members of the Congressional Black Caucus saw this disaster coming and tried to stop it. If you recall, we had an amendment when the authorization to use force came before this body, it was my amendment, that would have allowed the United Nations inspectors to complete their inspection process for weapons of mass destruction. Congress then, however, voted to

go to war. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus voted for that resolution. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus continue to oppose the occupation and work day and night to bring our young men and women home. And we will continue to be that voice that reminds our country that we truly, we really, we honestly, we do support and love our troops, and the best way that we can demonstrate that, the only way that we can demonstrate that, is by bringing them home and making sure that they have their economic security, their health care, and their mental health care and the resources they need to take their lives back.

Thank you, Congresswoman KILPATRICK, for your leadership and for calling us together tonight. Thank you, Congresswoman STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, for pulling us together and making sure we all stay on time and for your leadership on so many issues.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you, Congresswoman BARBARA LEE.

Quick statistics. Of the young men and women who have been killed in Iraq, total 3,734, 885 were less than 22; 1,013 were between 22 and 24; 1,007 between the age of 25 and 30; 445 between the age of 31 and 35; and older than 35, 445.

It gives me great pleasure at this time to yield to my good friend and colleague from the great State of California, the Chair of the Out of Iraq Caucus, Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS for such time as she may consume.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Congresswoman STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES for the leadership that she's providing this evening, having taken out the time on the floor to have the members of the Congressional Black Caucus engage this body on this issue of the war in Iraq. I thank you for your leadership, and I'm proud to work with you to help bring our Congress to the conclusion that we must get out of Iraq.

Last week, President Bush and his White House propaganda machine made another attempt at misleading the Nation. Yet again, unsubstantiated anecdotal claims of progress were used to support a continued occupation of Iraq.

However, the President's claims of progress ran contrary to multiple independent reports recently published, including, from the Government Accountability Office, General Jones, and the National Intelligence Estimate. These reports painted a bleak picture of Iraq: continued high levels of violence, a dysfunctional Iraqi government, and sectarian influence that continue to plague the Iraqi security forces.

President Bush's vision of an enduring relationship with Iraq amounts to an endless and unlimited military occupation. Instead of a significant change of policy, the President has reaffirmed his commitment to a dangerous continuation of a failed policy in Iraq.

Deepening sectarian divisions in Iraq make the American military presence increasingly obsolete. In fact, our presence may actually be making the situation worse as Iraqi political leaders hide behind our troops and refuse to make the necessary compromises.

Meanwhile, we continue to train and equip Iraqi security forces and so-called volunteer Sunni sectarian militias across Iraq. Experts suggest that we're merely training different sides of a violent civil war, and losing track of over 190,000 weapons meant for the security forces is surely only adding fuel to the fires raging in Iraq. That is why my colleagues and I recently introduced H.R. 3134, the Responsible Security in Iraq Act. This legislation will halt the dangerous practice of training and equipping of Iraqi security forces, at least until the Iraqi Government matures.

At the cost of precious American lives, the President seeks only to disguise the fact that he has no exit strategy for Iraq. It becomes increasingly clear that George Bush seeks only to protect his own legacy and saddle the next President with the mess he's created in the Middle East.

Let us not forget that, in addition to almost 3,800 troops who have died, 800 of those troops who have died in Iraq have died since the surge was announced in January, including 16 troops since General Petraeus came to Congress to testify just last week.

I know that the media, many in the media have blamed the wonderful, wonderful support group of the Democratic Caucus and people who want to get us out of Iraq for attacking General Petraeus. But I join with them, not in an attack on General Petraeus, but in telling the truth about what has been happening.

Moveon.org need not be ashamed of its advocacy. They need not be a shame of its ads. They are telling the truth, and we need to speak truth to power on this issue.

President Bush sought to appease those who oppose the war by announcing that 5,700 troops will be coming home this year, and another few brigades will possibly return by summer of next year. But these reductions were scheduled to occur with or without Bush's consent. Deployment limits are being reached, and the military has no trained and ready troops to replace the ones leaving.

As the New York Times stated, it's like George Bush dropping an object and then taking credit for gravity.

Regardless, these planned reductions would merely lower our troop levels to 130,000 by summer of 2008. It is absolutely unacceptable that our military presence in Iraq by next summer will still be the same as pre-surge levels.

I'm delighted for the families of the troops who will be leaving Iraq. Many of these troops will be returning from a second, third or even fourth deployment. However, without a significant change in strategy, the President is

signaling that these troops should not get too comfortable at home. President Bush will surely have them deployed back to Iraq as soon as possible.

As Chair of the Out of Iraq Caucus, I, along with my colleagues, have been advocating for a different direction for years now. In stark contrast to the direction of the President, we understand that the only acceptable option for Iraq is a fully funded withdrawal of all of our troops and military contracts.

The other day, my friend, Congressman JOHN MURTHA said, and I quote, "Yes, many Iraqis consider us the occupiers. But it is also true that Iraq is really occupying us." We couldn't be more right. He couldn't be more right.

Let's bring our troops home to their families as soon as possible and refocus this country's resources on the issues that matter the most to the American people. It is time to end this war in Iraq.

And to those who are getting a little bit disgusted with the fact that we don't seem to be making as much progress as we should here in the Congress of the United States, I would like to encourage them not to give up.

I know that it appears that Petraeus and the President organized a presentation and tried to win over the hearts of Americans by putting a general out there, just as he put Colin Powell out when Colin Powell went up to the U.N. and pointed to the buildings where weapons of mass destruction were being manufactured. Colin Powell has said since that time, it was perhaps the worst thing that he could have done in his career. And of course, people respect generals, and they respect Petraeus because he has a long history of having made sacrifice and having been a good warrior.

But ladies and gentlemen, he's wrong on this one. We don't have to back up. We don't have to shy away from this fight. We don't have to give in and think somehow we're going to be thought of as unpatriotic. Patriotism is to stand up for what is right, what is right for the security of this Nation.

We're at greater risk now than we were before we went in to invade Iraq. As a matter of fact, this President and this war has unsettled the entire Middle East. We know that since we've been there, not only have we created a civil war and all of the sectarian violence, we also know that we have pulled in to this war Iran, and we also know that we are on the verge of pulling in Syria to this war. We also know that this entire Middle East is unsettled because of our occupation.

Despite the fact that the President of the United States said we would be welcomed with open arms, they want us out of Iraq. They want to end the occupation.

Yes, we have some responsibilities there. Yes, we should help to rebuild Iraq, but first, we must bring our soldiers home. We must stop the carnage. We must stop the killings. We must bring our soldiers home.

And I join with BARBARA LEE and LYNN WOOLSEY and members of the Congressional Black Caucus who support the idea that we will vote for funding to bring the troops home safely and securely. We will not vote for funding to continue this war.

We know that the President of the United States has made another request in a supplemental. I will not be voting for any funding to continue the war. And for those of us who really, really believe in what we're saying, for those of us who are committed to the proposition that we can end this war, we will not give him another dime to continue the war.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I'd like to thank Congresswoman WATERS for her statement.

For the RECORD, I have a statement from Congresswoman EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON to be submitted for the RECORD.

Listen to these statistics. Of the percentage of persons serving in the military, 60 percent are white, 23 percent are African American, 10 percent are Hispanic, 3 Asian American Pacific. Of those serving in the Navy, 62 percent are Caucasian, 19 percent are African American. Those serving in the Air Force, 72 percent are Caucasian, 15 percent are African American, in the Marine Corps, 66 percent are Caucasian, 12 are African American.

Let's look at the statistics with regard to deaths as a result of this Iraq war. Of the 3,734 who have been killed in this war, 40 are American Indian or Alaska Native, 69 Asian, 350 African Americans, 405 Hispanic, Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 440.

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Totally in 2007, Caucasian, a total of 3,734.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure at this point to yield to my colleague and good friend from the great State of Texas, Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the distinguished chairwoman of the Ethics Committee, but also our leader on the Special Order hour tonight.

What a timely hour that you have allowed us to participate in. I add my appreciation as well to the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus and as well the leaders of the Out of Iraq Caucus and the Progressive Caucus, of which I am a member.

And so I raise the question tonight, where do we go from here? And I have standing in alongside of me the growing numbers of those fallen in battle from the 18th Congressional District and surrounding areas. Those faces represent families. They are husbands, wives, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers. They have left grandmothers and grandfathers. They have left family and friends. And it is interesting, as I look at a headline in the Houston Chronicle, it says: "America Has No Exit Strategy But Our Presi-

dent Does." And the gist of the article is that the exit strategy for President Bush is his retirement. For it is evident from his remarks last week that this administration has no exit strategy other than to say, I will not have the exiting of our troops. I will not cease the loss of lives until I leave the White House. I will not have the legacy of the book being written to say that I worked with the United States Congress, the American people, listened to their voices, understood that this was a political solution and not a military solution, but I will not sit down and reconcile with my Congress, with the American people, and bring our troops home as heroes. No, I am going to stay to the end and leave this to the next President.

A GI who died had criticized the war in Iraq. Seven soldiers signed a letter. Shortly thereafter, the soldier from Texas, Sergeant Omar Mora, died, one of his other fellow signers of the letter asking why are we here. Criticizing the war in Iraq. Soldiers on the battlefield. It is interesting that what is represented is that there is one mind in Iraq of these soldiers, but these soldiers are patriots who want to ask the question based upon their constitutional rights. Tragically, as the picture will show, this young man lost his life, and a fellow soldier who signed the letter likewise lost his life.

Another headline: "Texas City Sergeant Dies in Iraq Accident." Even in the last 24 hours, we are finding that those contractors, paid-for contractors, American contractors, one of our defense contractors, if you will, wound up killing 10-or-so Iraqis under the allegation that they were attacking a State Department envoy. We want those envoys to be protected, officials traveling around, but what they wind up doing is bringing Black Hawk helicopters. And these are private contractors making \$100,000 a year shooting up innocent Iraqis, creating then a greater target of our own military personnel. What is going on in Iraq?

So, Mr. Speaker and Madam Chairwoman, I rise today to suggest that it is time to declare a military success. This is not a question of agreeing with the "Mission Accomplished" of the President of the United States. This is to separate the political reconciliation that must be done by the Maliki government and surrounding Mid East states to resolve the conflict between Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds to the work of our soldiers. Our soldiers have done their job.

So H.R. 930, the Military Success Act of 2007, wants to declare a military success. Saddam Hussein is no longer there. We have had an election where we have elected a democratic government. And so all that our military has been asked to do, they have done it.

We have even gone further with the surge and collaborated with Sunnis and created a peaceful area in Anbar, but yet the sheik was assassinated. Why? Because you must have political reconciliation. And while we stand here on

the floor tonight, soldiers are dying. These faces are growing.

Mr. President, do you understand that the American people have spoken? And this is not cut and run, but this is recognizing that we are spending \$10 billion a month, which translates into \$329,670,330 per day, \$13,736,264 per hour, \$228,938 per minute, and \$3,816 per second.

I believe that we should move to the floor of the House, declare our soldiers victorious in the work they were assigned to do, and bring our troops home.

It is important to note that any false representation that bringing home troops in December is a reflection of the voices of the American people is not true. Having 130,000 troops in 2008, July, does nothing to bring our troops home. It is a reduction of the surge.

And so I am asking that our troops be brought home in a safe and secure manner so that our equipment can be brought out and that the announcement that the troops will begin to redeploy begins.

This is not a situation of fight them there or fight them here. This is not typographing this to the enemy. The enemy is well aware of everything we do. The President knows that General Petraeus said that al Qaeda was not there when Saddam Hussein was there. They were not there when we entered Iraq. They got there in 2005. And, therefore, it is important for the Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds to join together to fight al Qaeda. Everyone knows that Iraq is a place that is a training ground for al Qaeda.

So I think it is important, as I close, to be able to again offer our hand of reconciliation to the President, sit down with the leadership of this Congress. As Speaker PELOSI said, don't let this be a 10-year war. It is already longer than World War II. Save the lives of these valiant soldiers, rebuild our military, and let the political process in Iraq work so that peace and reconciliation can be brought forward.

It is a tragedy, and I offer my greatest sympathy to those who have fallen in battle; those who have been injured, some thousands, 22,000, 25,000, and growing. We must bring our troops home. We must listen to the voices of the American people. These are our heroes. The heroes are still standing in Iraq. Bring them home with yellow ribbons. Bring them home with celebration. It is time to vote and pass H.R. 930, the Military Success Act of 2007. Our soldiers have been successful in duty.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, may I also thank my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) for gathering on the floor tonight to discuss this important topic. This Congress will not, as the previous Republican Congress did, continue to rubber stamp what we believe to be an ill-conceived war. As we continue to receive reports on the situation in Iraq, it is important that we continue to look forward, to the future of Iraq beyond a U.S. military occupation.

Despite the multitude of mistakes perpetrated by President Bush and former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, our troops have achieved a military success in ousting Saddam Hussein and assisting the Iraqis in administering a democratic election and electing a democratic government. However, only the Iraqi government can secure a lasting peace. Time and time again, the Iraqi government has demonstrated an inability to deliver on the political benchmarks that they themselves agreed were essential to achieving national reconciliation. Continuing to put the lives of our soldiers and our national treasury in the hands of what by most informed accounts, even by members of the Bush Administration, is an ineffective central Iraqi government is irresponsible and contrary to the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the American people.

Our nation has already paid a heavy price in Iraq. Over 3770 American soldiers have died. In addition, more than 27,660 have been wounded in the Iraq war since it began in March 2003. June, July, and August have marked the bloodiest months yet in the conflict, and U.S. casualties in Iraq are 62 percent higher this year than at this time in 2006. This misguided, mismanaged, and misrepresented war has claimed too many lives of our brave servicemen; its depth, breadth, and scope are without precedent in American history. In addition, the U.S. is spending an estimated \$10 billion per month in Iraq. This \$10 billion a month translates into \$329,670,330 per day, \$13,736,264 per hour, \$228,938 per minute, and \$3,816 per second.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today because the Congress has listened to the American people, and demanded accountability, oversight, and competence. We saw fit to demand benchmark reports because the American people lost confidence in the Rubber Stamp Republican Congress and the Bush-Cheney team. The American people want a new strategy for success in Iraq.

The Foreign Affairs Committee, of which I am proud to be a member, has recently heard a string of reports from military and civilian officials about the political, military, social, and economic situation in Iraq. Two weeks ago, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) informed the Congress that the Iraqi government has met only three of the eighteen legislative, economic, and security benchmarks. Despite the surge, despite increasing U.S. military involvement, the Iraqi government has not made substantial progress toward stabilizing their country.

President Bush rationalized his surge, over opposition by myself and other House Democrats, by arguing it would give the Iraqi government "the breathing space it needs to make progress in other critical areas," bringing about reconciliation between warring factions, Sunni and Shia. However, non-partisan assessments, such as last week's GAO report, have illustrated that escalating U.S. military involvement in Iraq is instead hindering that nation's ability to move beyond the devastation of war and death, to build a successful new government, and to create a stable and secure environment. In the seven months since the surge began, increased American military presence has not been able to end the relentless cycles of sectarian violence that continue to plague Iraq. Nor have larger numbers of U.S. troops been successful in unifying and strengthening the Iraqi government.

Instead, the security situation continues to deteriorate. Sectarian violence remains high, and even the Bush Administration has noted the unsatisfactory progress toward political reconciliation. The Sunni-led insurgency continues, with insurgents conducting increasingly complex and well-coordinated attacks. The August 2007 National Intelligence Estimate cited ongoing violence, stating, "the level of overall violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians, remain high; Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled." The report went on to note that al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) "retains the ability to conduct high-profile attacks," and "Iraqi political leaders remain unable to govern effectively."

The ever-increasing sectarian violence is causing immense daily challenges for Iraqis. Millions have been displaced, and an Iraqi Red Crescent Organization has reported an increase of nearly 630,000 internally displaced persons from February 2007 to July 2007. The same organization predicts an additional 80,000 to 100,000 persons are displaced each month. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has estimated that 1.8 million Iraqis are now refugees, with an additional 40,000 to 50,000 fleeing to neighboring countries each month. Iraq has become a humanitarian disaster, and one that continues to get worse every day.

We are not here today to debate whether there has been some decrease in violence in Baghdad. The United States military is a skilled and highly proficient organization, and where there are large numbers of U.S. troops, it is unsurprising that we see fewer incidents of violence. However, it is our responsibility to take a longer-term view. The United States will not and should not permanently prop up the Iraqi government and military. U.S. military involvement in Iraq will come to an end, and, when U.S. forces leave, the responsibility for securing their nation will fall to Iraqis themselves. And so far, we have not seen a demonstrated commitment by the Iraqi government.

In addition, evidence suggests that not only is increased U.S. military presence in Iraq not making that nation more secure, it may also be threatening our national security by damaging our ability to respond to real threats to our own homeland. The recently released video by Osama bin Laden serves to illustrate that President Bush has not caught this international outlaw, nor brought him to justice. Instead, he has diverted us from the real war on terror to the war of his choice in Iraq.

The former chairman and vice chairman of the 9/11 commission, Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton, share this view. In a recent op-ed, Kean and Hamilton note that our own actions have contributed to a rise of radicalization and rage in the Muslim world. Kean and Hamilton write that "no conflict drains more time, attention, blood, treasure, and support from our worldwide counterterrorism efforts than the war in Iraq. It has become a powerful recruiting and training tool for al-Qaeda."

Mr. Speaker, our troops in Iraq did everything we asked them to do. We sent them overseas to fight an army; they are now caught in the midst of an insurgent civil war and political upheaval. I have, for some time now, advocated for Congressional legislation declaring a military victory in Iraq, and recognizing the success of our military. Our brave

troops have completed the task we set for them; it is time now to bring them home. Our next steps should not be a continuing escalation of military involvement, but instead a diplomatic surge.

This is why I introduced H.R. 930, the "Military Success in Iraq and Diplomatic Surge for National and Political Reconciliation in Iraq Act of 2007." This legislation would make diplomacy and statecraft tools of the first, rather than the last, resort. We must seek constructive engagement with Iraq, its neighbors, and the rest of the international community, as we work to bring resolution to this calamitous conflict that has already gone on far too long.

Democrats in Congress will not continue to rubber stamp the President's ill-conceived war effort. Last November, the American people spoke loudly and clearly, demanding a new direction to U.S. foreign policy, and we here in Congress are committed to seeing that change be brought about. We are working to see the extensive funds currently being spent to sustain the war in Iraq go to important domestic programs and to securing our homeland against real and imminent threats.

President Bush and Vice-President CHENEY have been given numerous chances and ample time by the American people and the Congress to straighten out the mess in Iraq. They have failed. It is pure fantasy to imagine that President Bush's military surge has created the necessary safety and security to meet economic, legislative, and security benchmarks. It is time for a new strategy, a new plan that will encourage Iraqis to take charge of their own destiny, seek constructive and sustained regional engagement, and substitute the ill-advised military surge for a thoughtful diplomatic one. It is time to be realistic and pragmatic, to recognize that our troops achieved what they were initially sent in for and that continued U.S. military engagement is not bringing about the desired results.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you, Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE of Texas.

Did you know that there are proportionately more African American and proportionately fewer white servicemen in the military than in the comparable civilian workforce? In other words, there are greater numbers of African Americans serving in the military than in the workforce of the United States of America. That presents a problem.

I will go on with other statistics as the hour goes along, but it gives me great pleasure to yield to my colleague and friend from the great State of Georgia, the gentleman, DAVID SCOTT.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Thank you very much. It is indeed a pleasure to be on the floor with you, gentlelady and good friend from Ohio. You are doing a wonderful job in leading this hour.

To the Congressional Black Caucus and the leadership of the Congressional Black Caucus, America must take its collective hats off to the Congressional Black Caucus for from the very beginning it has been the Congressional Black Caucus that has provided the leadership in speaking out on this war in Iraq and in speaking out from a standpoint of what is wrong with it. And I am proud to be on the floor with you this evening.

I thought that I might come at this from the perspective of where I sit in the Congress. I was not here when the actual vote took place 6 years ago to commit our forces to Iraq. I was a part 5 years ago coming into Congress with that first class that came in after 9/11, and it was an extraordinary time. But I think it's very good for us, as we look at this situation in Iraq, to be able to reflect from it. My father always would tell me, Son, the best way for you to get out of a problem is to remember how you got into it in the first place. And it might be good for us to do that.

I happen to serve on the Foreign Affairs Committee. I am the vice chairman of our Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and International Trade. I also am a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and I am the co-chairman of our Democratic group on National Security. I mentioned those positions that I work with here in the Congress so that you can understand the perspective from which I come to this very important issue of Iraq. And let me just state at the very beginning, as I said, it's good to know how you got into a situation.

There is one profound fact that happened on 9/11. On the very day of 9/11 after a conference in the White House between our Vice President CHENEY, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, and Deputy Defense Secretary Wolfowitz, collectively they said these words: Iraq must pay for this. That's very profound. On the day of the 9/11 attack, the basic architects of this policy said, without one iota of evidence, without one iota of anything, Iraq must pay for this. Not even knowing it was al Qaeda, but automatically.

Now, I mention that simply because, as I said, we have got to know how we got into a situation to know how we get out of it. That's very profound. The reason I mention that is that from the very beginning there has been a line of direct effort by some, the major architects of this most misguided foreign policy, to equate Iraq with the war on terror. A colossal mistake and the history books will reflect that. We then prepared to go in and attack a country that did not attack us.

I am on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and last week I sat with great admiration and I truly believe I have great admiration for General David Petraeus. He's a general, he's a soldier's soldier, and he is doing and has done a remarkable job, as have all of our military. But as I sat there and I watched him, this general, my mind went back to another general at the beginning of this by the name of Colin Powell. Here was the same situation. After 9/11 we sat there and a general was put in front of us to sell us on going to war with Iraq, with information and intelligence that many in the administration knew was not true. The books that are pouring out now by the bushel tell us that everybody, from the CIA to the Defense Department to so

many who were saying this, in other words, that the intelligence books were cooked. Not a single person from Iraq came over to us and asked us, Come over to our country and turn us into a democracy.

No, this was a war of choice based upon lies and deceit, and that is why this will go down in history as the biggest foreign policy blunder in the history of these United States. Make no mistake about it.

So the question has to be now, why? Here we are in Iraq on lies and misinformation that are out now by the book loads; so we can't deny it.

□ 2100

And the American people know it. And they are expecting this Congress of the United States to stand up to this White House and say, "No more."

Let me tell you something, folks; I've been over there to Iraq, three times I've been over there. I have met with our soldiers, I have eaten with them. But the most important part of my trips over there was not to Camp Victory or to the Green Zone or to Baghdad. Even my meetings with General Casey, General Abizaid, all of them, which I cherish and I have pictures and all of that, and even the meeting I had with one soldier from Georgia who came up to me and hugged me with tears streaming down his eyes, tears streaming down my eyes, and he said to me, Congressman SCOTT, when I'm hugging you, it's like I'm hugging a piece of home. I can't tell you how I felt.

But ladies and gentlemen, let me just tell you the most significant parts of these trips was on the way back. Each stop that I went over to go to Ramstein Air Base, Landstuhl, that's the hospital, that's the medical center. That's where they come, the injured come when they are injured in down country, as they call it, in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's where they are. You want to know about this war, you want to know why this war needs to be ended, that's the story, to look into these 18- and 19- and 20- and 21-year-old kids' eyes, half their heads blown off, arms missing, blind, and they ask the question, why? Why? Why are we here?

I'm telling you, somebody's going to have to answer that question. On the bleached bones of many past great civilizations and nations are written those pathetic words, "Too late." They moved too late to correct a great wrong. I beg and I hope that this Congress has the resolve in it to not move too late now. The whole world is depending on us.

One of the things that President Bush did, and we've got to understand it, what he did in sending General Petraeus up is the same he did in sending Colin Powell up. And history is going to write it, not DAVID SCOTT, not Mrs. TUBBS JONES, not this Congress, history is going to write that this President will go down in history as being a President that highly used and

misused our military. That is one of the greatest shames coming out of this Iraq situation.

And now, here we are in Iraq. I don't think the American people know that over one-half of our entire combat capacity is involved in Iraq. If I'm China, if I'm Russia, if I'm Iran, which they are, they're sitting back fat and happy, anxious to see us continue to run our military in the ground in this fruitless effort in Iraq. Soldiers, many of them on their third and fourth tours of duty. Fifteen months they've extended it to, not even giving an equal amount of time for rest because they know that the military is at the breaking point. No way we can continue this war. It will run our military into the ground.

And now let me just say one word about the President's move here. What this is is the President is saying to us, I'm not going to end this. It's not going to be on my watch. Even out of his own mouth he says we will hand this enduring relationship in Iraq over, as he says it, to my successor. That's what he said, to his successor.

So the American people have nixed that. The President is out of the picture, but we here in Congress are in the picture. It's up to us to not move too late. We must correct the direction we're headed, and the first order of business is to end this war in Iraq.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I would like to thank my colleague from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT) for his statement.

GENERAL LEAVE

For the RECORD, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I want to thank my colleague, the newest Member of the Congressional Black Caucus, who has joined us in the House, Congresswoman LAURA RICHARDSON, from the great State of California, who has joined us on the floor this evening, for her support. I also want to thank my staffer, Aaron Wasserman, for his work and research.

Let me close out this Special Order with a few more statistics and a couple of statements. Can you imagine this: The amount of money that we've spent on the Iraq war so far, 270,850,440 children could benefit from receiving health insurance for 1 year. In addition, a Census Bureau news release stated that 8.7 million uninsured children in 2006 could be insured for 31 years with the amount of money that has been used in the Iraq war. The number of 4-year scholarships that could be provided, 21,927,497 scholarships could be provided to the children of the United States nationwide if we used the money from Iraq.

And let's talk about, for a moment, the cost to the people of Iraq. A recent

article by the Washington Post has said that Iraq needs 10,000 megawatts of electricity per day, but they're only producing 4,110. In civilian casualties, since April of 2004, the average number of Iraqis killed per day has grown from just over 20 to over 100. The total number of Iraqi casualties is estimated to be between 70,264 and 150,000 people.

I am so pleased and honored to have an opportunity to be on the floor leading this Special Order on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus. I personally am opposed to any permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, and no control by the U.S. of Iraqi oil. I am opposed to the surge. The benchmarks not being met are, the GAO says three of 18 were not met, and I am opposed to continued funding for the surge.

There is no military solution to this war, and only political and diplomatic solutions will actually work. We should not arm Iraqi security forces when the United States leaves, and we should not leave behind weapons that can be used to perpetuate violence. We have a moral obligation to help with Iraqi national reconciliation and reconstruction.

I've been a Member of Congress now for 9 years, and I never thought when I ran for Congress that I would have the responsibility or obligation of attending deployments or attending funerals of my constituents, but as a Member of Congress I see it as my obligation. I'm so happy that even though I oppose this war, that I have a chance to go and meet with many of the Army Reservists and National Guards who have been deployed from my congressional district, and go to them with their families and say to them that I pray for their safe return, that when they return from their mission over in Iraq and Afghanistan, that they all come back.

I remember one of the deployments I took a flag that I had flown over the Capitol and gave it to these young men. And I said, I pray that you will bring my flag back. I want you to fly it every day, but when you come back, bring it back, but bring every member of your group back with you. And you know what? They brought me my flag back, and every one of the members of that troop came back home. It was a wonderful thing. But I've witnessed the death of a 19-year-old, Officer Sloan. I've witnessed the death of a 38-year-old. I've witnessed the death of so many young men and women as a result of this particular war.

And I say to the American people who are listening to our Special Order this evening, the Congressional Black Caucus believes and argues to the American people that you need to step up your protests. If you believe that this war is not correct and that our troops need to come home, you need to tell somebody. You just can't sit in your chair and be an armchair quarterback. You can't sit back and not say anything. The people, the Congress, the U.S. House of Representatives and the

Senate needs to hear from you. The President needs to hear from you to let him know that we do not support his continued effort over in Iraq.

I am pleased, as I said, to be a part of this Special Order. I am pleased to represent the finest congressional district in the United States of America, the 11th Congressional District of Ohio. And I thank all of my constituents for writing, calling, e-mailing, faxing and saying to me, Congresswoman, it is your job to stand up and oppose this war. And ladies and gentlemen of Cleveland and northeast Ohio, that is what I'm doing.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the people of America who want a new way forward in Iraq and expect Congress to act accordingly.

My constituents in North Texas continue to grieve the loss of their sons and daughters in Iraq and voice their utmost concerns for our troops' safety. They deserve answers from me and from our government regarding the consequence of the monetary and casualty cost of the Iraq war.

Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom have affected the lives of countless Americans. There are over 3,000 troops from the great state of Texas that have been wounded during duty and many thousands more from across the United States.

Despite the struggles our soldiers face both on the field and the home front, they are thankful for the support they have been receiving from their fellow Americans. They share their concerns none of which are for themselves, but of their fellow comrades and families. If given a chance, they are willing to return to the field and fight for this nation. I stand here today, humbled by these men and women.

The current administration has recently submitted data reflecting that violence in Iraq has decreased, but this data has been skewed. The data does not reflect the truth. Violence in Iraq has increased.

It is our responsibility to care for the best interest of our soldiers. It is our responsibility to protect our troops from unnecessary harm. Our men and women in uniform are owed a debt of gratitude for their courageous efforts. A failure to bring about democracy in Iraq rests solely on the shoulders of the President and his Administration.

Mr. Speaker, a great American military cannot be a substitute for a weak Iraqi government. Americans want a new direction in Iraq. The best way to support our troops serving in Iraq is to bring them home.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, tonight members of the Congressional Black Caucus stand with the American people to tell the President once more: it is time to end the war in Iraq. As co-chairs of the Out of Iraq Caucus, two of my fellow CBC members, Representatives MAXINE WATERS and BARBARA LEE, are among the preeminent leaders in Congress in the fight to end this misbegotten war. I want to thank them for their leadership and for their tireless efforts to bring our troops home.

Last week's much-anticipated testimony, report and "new plan" were just more of the same. Once again refusing to heed the facts on the ground and the wishes of the American people, President Bush simply reiterated his

stubborn commitment to continue his failed policy in Iraq.

The "progress" reported by the Administration is arguable. But what is not subject to debate is this: there is no such thing as "winning" an occupation. We cannot have a military "victory" in Iraq. The only way out of this quagmire is a political solution. And after more than four years, there has been no political progress in Iraq. The President seems to believe that another 10 years of occupation, to the tune of trillions of dollars and thousands more American lives, is worth wagering on this disastrous conflict. The American people and the Congressional Black Caucus disagree.

The White House and its emissaries continue to urge the Congress and the American people to view the disastrous conflict in Iraq through rose-colored glasses. But we know better. No independent assessment of the situation in Iraq aligns with the picture presented by the White House. The Government Accountability Office reports that the Iraqi government has failed to meet 15 of the 18 benchmarks for success in Iraq as articulated by the President himself. The Jones Commission concludes that the Iraqi National Police force that we have spent millions of dollars training and equipping is 'dysfunctional,' riddled with sectarianism, corruption and inefficiency, and should be disbanded altogether. The consensus of the nation's intelligence community, in the latest National Intelligence Estimate, is that the 'level of overall violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians remains high' and 'Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled.'

Furthermore, the Administration's use of statistics to reinforce its claims of success is problematic. According to a report in the Washington Post, U.S. military leaders and the White House are 'cherry-picking' data to bolster their claims that the President's failed war strategy is working. In order to support this claim, military and Administration calculations are based on a system of categorizing and excluding statistics that 'selectively ignored negative trends' and 'puzzled' senior intelligence officials and the nation's chief auditor and head of the Government Accountability Office. For example, people who were killed by a shot to the back of the head are included as 'sectarian' casualties, but those killed by a shot to the front of the head are not counted because they are assumed to be dead from 'criminal' activity, according to an intelligence analyst quoted in the article.

In fact, the death toll in Iraq is rising. The Associated Press reports that while the President's escalation has succeeded in bringing violence in Baghdad down from peak levels, the death toll from sectarian attacks around the country is running nearly double the pace from a year ago. The AP counted 1,809 civilian deaths in August, making it the highest monthly total this year. Though the administration continually cites a reduction in violence in Anbar province as evidence of the surge's success, in fact, the Marines had already established ties to local Sunni leaders long before the 'surge' strategy was even announced. June, July and August 2007 marked the bloodiest summer so far for U.S. troops in Iraq, with 264 soldiers killed.

This grim picture is further reflected in Iraqi public opinion. A BBC/ABC News poll conducted in August concludes that Iraqi opinion is at its gloomiest since the polls began in

February 2004. According to this latest poll, between 67 and 70 percent of Iraqis say the escalation has made things worse in the key areas of security, the conditions for political dialogue, reconstruction and economic development. A majority (57 percent) of Iraqis believe that attacks on coalition forces are acceptable, including 93 percent of Sunnis and 50 percent of Shia.

The token drawdown of troops proposed by General Petraeus and endorsed by the President, in which nearly a year would pass before troop strength returns to pre-escalation levels, is neither a political compromise nor a "new plan." In fact, this drawdown has been scheduled to take place since the beginning of the "surge," because to do otherwise would stretch our military beyond the breaking point. So, in effect, the President is offering nothing at all in response to the demand of the American people and the Congress to bring our troops home—except another 10 years of war and occupation.

The President continues to ask our troops to referee a civil war whose outcome depends entirely on the actions of politicians in Baghdad. As General Petraeus himself has pointed out, the conflict in Iraq cannot be solved militarily; only a political settlement by Iraq's leaders can bring this conflict to an end. Yet, despite the fact that Iraqi politicians have made virtually no progress toward this goal in four years, the President insists on a continuing American military involvement, with no end in sight. The American people understand that this policy has failed, and this Congress will continue to fight to bring an end to this disaster and to bring our troops home.

EDUCATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to come to the floor this evening to speak on a topic that I, quite honestly, am quite passionate about, and that is the education of our children, of my children, of the children in our communities and the children of all the parents across this great country. It's an issue that I have been involved with for some time, first and foremost as a father with my own children at home, obviously from the very beginning days as educating them as a parent before they went off to school, and then later as they are in school now, both at home and off in college as well. Obviously, as a parent, we are all intimately involved with those issues. But in another sense as well, in a public official capacity. Before coming to Congress, I had the opportunity to work with the issues of education and public education, serving for 12 years, as I did, in the State government and serving on the Education Committee there.

I come to the floor now tonight to talk about an issue, education, and specifically some legislation that will be coming before this House, and eventually the Senate as well, and perhaps to

the President's desk, and that is something called NCLB, No Child Left Behind. Now, as I say, there are numerous issues, and we just heard the other side of the aisle talk about the issue of war, which is often making the press and making the media and is talked about on talk radio quite continuously, as it should be. And the issue of education, public education is perhaps down there on some of the polls and down there as far as talk radio and the media as well. And I have noticed that the issue of the reauthorization of NCLB, No Child Left Behind, also has not been out there in the forefront of people's debate. But rest assured, it shall be in the days and weeks ahead, as first the full committee in this House will consider legislation and has already drafted legislation, which I will talk about shortly, as the committee begins to consider that and hopefully have a number of public hearings on that and eventually come before this entire House for discussion.

So I think it's important that we get out in front of it, if you will, to talk about NCLB, and maybe a little bit about the history of where we are on public education in this country, how did we get to the point we are right now; NCLB, and what it has wrought to this country over the last half a dozen years that it has been the law of this land, and what could occur if it does get reauthorized.

And finally, at the end, of course, I would like to talk a little bit about what I see as the solution to the problems of public education and their impact upon NCLB. And I will just give you a tad bit of a look at that right now, and that is, I have dropped in some legislation, H.R. 3177, and what H.R. 3177 is is a bill. I call it the LEARN Act, "Local Education Authority Returns Now." And what that acronym simply means is that we really should take a look at education, see where we came from, and realize that in the earliest days of education in this country the idea was that having the parents involved first and foremost, having the teachers, the local principals involved first and foremost, and then the school board or community boards that run education is really the best way to ensure that our young kids will have the best education in their community, that the standards will be the highest possible and obtainable for all the children in their school, that the teachers will be the best and the brightest, that the methodology that we will use in those schools will be the best, and the school books and the programs and what have you will all be as best that we can in our local communities.

□ 2115

That has been the history of public education. That has been the history of private education, as well, and that is really what is at the heart of my piece of legislation, H.R. 3177, to say, can't we return, or can't we move forward, if