

and benchmarks. As a teacher, I found that it was critical to provide guidance to students whose reports were not proceeding on schedule.

President Bush definitely needs some help in his work in Iraq. His initial research was terribly flawed and cut corners in disturbing ways. He ignored the advice of learned experts in his stubborn pursuit of a flawed hypothesis. When he brainstormed an outline for pursuing the war, he never planned for how it would end. His incoherent strategy in Iraq rambles on and on without any movement towards a successful conclusion. I personally would have failed this student long ago.

The question we face today, however, is on whether we should set a strategy for redeploying our troops out of Iraq or continue giving the President a blank check to continue an open-ended war in Iraq. I voted against the war and I want our troops out now.

Now that Democrats have been voted in as the majority in the House and Senate, we have responsibilities to our constituents to exercise constitutional and congressional oversight in Iraq. To fulfill that responsibility, I stand in support of the Iraq Accountability Act, which would establish a definite date to end this awful war.

0915

FUNDING PORK

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCHENRY. \$120 million for shrimp, how does that help our men and women in harm's way? \$100 million for citrus growers, what does that do to help our fighting men and women? \$74 million for peanut storage. That may be grand for some Washington politicians and peanut growers, but how does that help and protect our American way of life and our men and women in harm's way? \$25 million for spinach. Even kids don't like spinach, but Washington politicians do, so they can take that pork-barrel project home.

But here is the kicker in this supplemental appropriations bill: Billions for livestock. That is the kicker because livestock is literally pork for pork.

It is the most hypocritical bill we have seen in decades here on the House floor. It is wrong for our troops in battle, but it is a great gift for Washington Democrat politicians.

All the while we debate here on the floor, the Speaker of the House goes to raise money with fat cats in New York City. That is wrong for America, and the American people should know it, Mr. Speaker.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAPUANO). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 263, nays 146, answered “present” 2, not voting 22, as follows:

Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—146

Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (MNY)

[Roll No. 185]

YEAS—263

Abercrombie	Gillmor	Murphy (CT)
Ackerman	Gonzalez	Murphy, Patricia
Aderholt	Goodlatte	Murtha
Alexander	Gordon	Napolitano
Allen	Graves	Neal (MA)
Andrews	Green, Al	Oberstar
Arcuri	Green, Gene	Obey
Baca	Grijalva	Olver
Bachus	Gutierrez	Ortiz
Baird	Hall (NY)	Pallone
Baker	Hall (TX)	Pascrell
Baldwin	Hare	Pastor
Bean	Hastings (FL)	Paul
Becerra	Hastings (WA)	Payne
Berman	Hayes	Perlmutter
Berry	Herseth	Peterson (PA)
Bishop (GA)	Higgins	Petri
Bishop (NY)	Hill	Pickering
Bishop (UT)	Hinchey	Pomeroy
Blumenauer	Hinojosa	Price (NC)
Bono	Hirono	Rahall
Boren	Hodes	Rangel
Boswell	Hoekstra	Reichert
Boucher	Holden	Renzi
Boustany	Holt	Reyes
Boyd (FL)	Honda	Reynolds
Boysd (KS)	Hooley	Rodriguez
Brady (PA)	Hoyer	Ross
Braley (IA)	Hunter	Rothman
Brown (SC)	Inslee	Royal-Allard
Brown, Corrine	Israel	Ruppersberger
Brown-Waite, Ginny	Issa	Rush
Burgess	Jackson (IL)	Ryan (OH)
Butterfield	Jackson-Lee	Salazar
Cannon	(TX)	Sali
Capito	Jefferson	Sánchez, Linda
Capps	Jindal	T.
Capuano	Johnson (GA)	Sanchez, Loretta
Cardoza	Johnson (IL)	Sarbanes
Carnahan	Johnson, E. B.	Schakowsky
Carney	Jones (NC)	Schiff
Castle	Kagan	Schwartz
Castor	Kaptur	Scott (GA)
Chabot	Keller	Scott (VA)
Clay	Kennedy	Sensenbrenner
Cleaver	Kildee	Serrano
Clyburn	Kilpatrick	Sestak
Coble	Kind	Shadegg
Cohen	Klein (FL)	Shea-Porter
Conyers	Kline (MN)	Sherman
Cooper	Kucinich	Shimkus
Costa	LaHood	Shuler
Costello	Langevin	Simpson
Cramer	Lantos	Sires
Crowley	Larsen (WA)	Skelton
Cuellar	Larson (CT)	Slaughter
Cummings	Lee	Smith (NJ)
Davis (AL)	Levin	Smith (WA)
Davis (CA)	Lewis (GA)	Snyder
Davis (IL)	Lipinski	Solis
Davis, Tom	Loebssack	Space
Deal (GA)	Lofgren, Zoe	Stark
DeFazio	Lowey	Stearns
DeGette	Lynch	Sutton
Delahunt	Mahoney (FL)	Taylor
DeLauro	Maloney (NY)	Tauscher
Dent	Markey	Tanner
Dicks	Matsui	Taylor
Dingell	McCarthy (NY)	Thompson (MS)
Doggett	McCollum (MN)	Thornberry
Doolittle	McDermott	Tierney
Doyle	McGovern	Towns
Edwards	McIntyre	Udall (NM)
Ellison	McMorris	Van Hollen
Emmanuel	Rodgers	Velázquez
Eshoo	McNerney	Visclosky
Etheridge	McNulty	Walden (OR)
Farr	Meehan	Walz (MN)
Fattah	Meek (FL)	Wasserman
Ferguson	Meeks (NY)	Schultz
Filner	Michaud	Waters
Fortenberry	Miller (NC)	Watson
Foxx	Miller, George	Watt
Frank (MA)	Mitchell	Waxman
Giffords	Mollohan	Weiner
Gilchrest	Moore (KS)	Welch (VT)
Gillibrand	Moore (WI)	Wexler

U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 2 of House Resolution

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and in-

visc and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1591.

There was no objection.

261, proceedings will now resume on the bill (H.R. 1591) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed on Thursday, March 22, 2007, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) had 59½ minutes remaining and the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) had 51 minutes remaining.

Who yields time?

□ 0945

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 minutes.

Yesterday, a number of Members on the Republican side of the aisle sought to belittle the legislation before us because, in addition to funding the needs of the troops in Iraq, it contains money to address a number of domestic priorities. To ridicule that legislation, they tried to belittle items such as funding for levees in New Orleans, and agriculture disaster payments. In that they have been joined by editorial writers at papers such as the Washington Post.

Like the Post, the Republican speakers of yesterday indicated that their main objection to this legislation is the way it tries to create pressure to end our military involvement in an Iraq civil war. Those speakers and the Washington Post editorial writers make no effort to understand why these additional items are there. They simply ridicule them for their own purposes. This bill has my name on it, and I take full responsibility for each and every item in the bill.

Despite the comments of my good friend from California suggesting that if I could have written this bill, it would have been quite different, this is not a bill that was imposed from NANCY PELOSI's Speaker's Office. Oh, yes, she was consulted. But every last provision in this bill was not included until I personally approved of it, and I take full responsibility for it.

I want to be very clear about some of the items that the editorial writers and certain Members of this House have been criticizing.

Let's start with agriculture. I haven't voted for a farm bill in the last 10 years because I believe that existing farm programs provide way too much funding for large farmers and way too little funding for family farmers. But the fact is that over the past 2 years, over 70 percent of the counties in this country were declared disaster areas, not by me, but by the President of the United States. That entitles farmers who have suffered that weather-related disaster to certain forms of compensation.

The previous Congress tried to work its way through that problem for well over a year and failed. We at one time this year were looking at a bill in the Senate costing \$6 billion. Thanks to the efforts of Chairman PETERSON on this side of the Capitol, the cost of

those agriculture disaster programs have been cut by one-third, by tightening up eligibility requirements.

I applaud him for making those changes.

There is a second criticism being made about the fact that there is some money in here for dairy. You bet there is. Because under the Republican stewardship, during the last Congress, or two Congresses ago, actually, in order to use an accounting gimmick, the then majority on the Agriculture Committee arranged to have the dairy program expire one month before every other farm program. That was done only for budget fiction purposes, to hide the true cost of the farm bill 5 years ago. You bet, in this legislation there is a 1-month fix so that when we go into writing the next farm bill, dairy will have a chance to compete with other farm programs.

I find the Washington Post criticism of this especially interesting, since they often squawk about the fact that farm programs give too much to large farmers. The MILC Program happens to focus on small farmers, which is why so many big farmers don't like the program. I make no apology for recognizing that is an inequity that needs to be fixed.

Then we have a squawk about spinach. Let me tell you why spinach is in here. You can laugh about it now, but people were dying last year because of an E. coli outbreak.

Now, the FDA did not have the authority to require mandatory recalls of spinach. What some of these companies did, despite the fact that their product was clean, they voluntarily withdrew their product from the market. That cost them a bundle and brought a lot of people to near bankruptcy.

I have heard a lot of conservatives on this floor talk about how outrageous it is when the government engages in an unconstitutional taking. They usually are talking in terms of land or environment. Doesn't the government that required or that asked these people to participate in the withdrawal in order to protect public health, doesn't that government have an obligation to people who exercise their patriotic duty and did what they were asked? I think they do. That is why this is in here.

Then they are squawking about aquaculture. Well, let me explain why that item is in the bill. In eight States in the union, fish farmers woke up one morning and discovered that the Federal Government had issued an edict which prevented them from transferring their product across State lines because lake trout, in the Great Lakes region, had been discovered to have viral hemorrhagic septicemia, a highly virulent fish disease. If it was allowed to get into lakes, in the Great Lakes, it could have ruined the entire fish supply. So, the government said you can't sell your fish across State lines.

Again, the problem was that the fish that they were prohibited from shipping across State lines was all healthy.

In a catch-22 situation, if their fish had been diseased, they could have collected under disaster programs. But because they were healthy, they couldn't collect. So the government put those people out of business.

Does the government have an obligation to correct that problem? You better bet you they do. That is why it is in this bill.

There are some other items in the bill as well that people don't like. But the main frustration on the part of the opponents of this bill is because people don't like the way that we are going about trying to end our military participation in an Iraqi civil war.

Let me submit to you the problem we have today is not that we didn't listen enough to people like the Washington Post, it is that we listened too much. They endorsed going to war in the first place. They helped drive the drumbeat that drove almost two-thirds of the people in this Chamber to vote for that misbegotten, stupid, ill-advised war that has destroyed our influence over a third of the world. So I make no apology if the moral sensibilities of some people on this floor, or the editorial writers of the Washington Post, are offended because they don't like the specific language contained in our benchmarks or in our timelines.

What matters in the end is not what the specific language is. What matters is whether or not we produce a product today that puts pressure on this administration and sends a message to Iraq, to the Iraqi politicians, that we are going to end the permanent, long-term babysitting service. That is what we are trying to do.

If the Washington Post is offended about the way we do it, that is just too bad. But we are in the arena, they are not. This is the best we can do, given the tools we have, and I make absolutely no apology for it.

I would say one thing, those of us who voted against the war in the first place wouldn't have nearly as hard a time getting us out of the war if people like the Washington Post and those who criticized us on the floor yesterday hadn't supported going into that stupid war in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I would not want the gentleman from Wisconsin to think, since I don't have an opening statement, that I don't feel as passionately about this issue as he does. We just happen to disagree about how we support the troops, whether we make an effort to support them by providing adequate and flexible funding for the commanders, or have a mandatory withdrawal.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) a member of the committee, for 2 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thought freedom was worth fighting for. I thought, when we saw all those Iraqis risk their lives to go and

vote and establish a government and establish a Constitution and to have, possibly, freedom of speech, that was something worth our level of effort. If you actually go over there and talk to those people, you find out that it is a minority that is trying to break the will of this body. That is what is going on.

What I object to in this bill is the way you have brought this to the floor. You have got subsidies for spinach. You know, my constituents are asking, who put that in the bill, Popeye? Why don't you let us have a vote on whether or not we want to attach funding for peanut farmers and funding for spinach farmers to a war supplemental?

Yes, why don't we have a vote on the Murtha language? Why are you denying us an opportunity, this body, a Democratic institution, the ability to say collectively as a majority, we think this kind of language is what we want to have?

I don't deny the gentleman from Pennsylvania, as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Defense, to put forward his plan. Even though he is not the Commander in Chief, the way I read the Constitution, he can do that. But the way I also read the Constitution and the Federalist papers, we are supposed to have some kind of a vote, and you are just bringing this thing forward under a closed rule.

I personally think that is a disgrace, what is going on here. I am going to vote against this bill. I hope, as we move forward in this process, democracy, which the Iraqis are willing to risk their lives for, will someday be re-instituted in this body here.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN).

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, 4 years ago President Bush sent our troops to war without a plan for success in Iraq, and without a plan to care for our wounded soldiers returning home.

During those 4 years, the old Congress rubber-stamped the failed policies of the Bush administration. The American people know well that when you ignore failure and bad decisions, you simply get more of them.

Today, we are demanding accountability for a change, accountability to ensure that our troops get the training and equipment they need, accountability to ensure that our wounded soldiers returning home are treated with a dignity that they deserve. We hold the Iraqi government accountable for taking the steps toward political reconciliation which they, themselves, have said are necessary to achieve stability.

The accountability measures in this bill track the recommendations made by the independent bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission. The President chose to reject those recommendations and, instead, to escalate the war in Iraq.

At the same time, the President has not paid adequate attention to those who were responsible for the attacks of September 11, 2001, al Qaeda, operating out of Afghanistan.

This bill provides additional resources for completing that mission and for holding those responsible who did attack us on September 11. Al Qaeda is still plotting against us. It demands accountability, it supports our troops, and it strengthens our national security.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a change and direction in Iraq. It is time to bring some accountability to the history of failed decisions we have made so we don't continue to make the same bad decisions going forward. The American people asked for and deserve a change in direction. That is what this bill does.

□ 1000

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield for a unanimous consent request to the gentleman from Texas.

(Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation, thanking both Congressman MURTHA and Congressman OBEY for their work.

It has now been 4 years since this war started, over 3 years since we heard the phrase "mission accomplished," and almost a year and half since the Iraqi elections for a permanent government—it is time for the Iraqi government to police, govern, and run its country. This bill also provides more support for our veterans and military healthcare.

This legislation will provide funding for our troops, but it will also force the Iraqis to take control of their own country, and bring our troops home within the next 18 months—possibly sooner, if the Iraqis do not meet benchmarks that demonstrate they are making progress.

Our commitment in Iraq, which grew under the President's surge plan last month, has strained our military, cost thousands of U.S. and Iraqi lives, and has created serious readiness problems in the Army and Marine Corps.

I don't like the idea of setting a timeline, but for 4 years we have had an open-ended commitment, and after those 4 years, we are still seeing some of the bloodiest attacks, and highest casualty numbers to date. We need to set benchmarks to force the Iraqis to take over their own country, and this bill does that. It is not pulling our troops out immediately—if Iraqis rise to this responsibility, we will have troops there for another 18 months, but if they don't, we will begin redeployment this year.

After 4 years, it is time Congress exercise authority over the way this war is being run. Congress is not 535 commanders in chief, but we must provide guidance on what we will ask the American taxpayers to fund. We have held dozens of hearings this year, and passed a non-binding resolution opposing the escalation or surge in U.S. troops. Our vote on this Supplemental will be another step in bringing a resolution to this conflict and will let the Iraqis know our commitment is not open-ended.

I applaud the leadership and Appropriations committee on bringing this bill to the floor, and

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to yield time to my Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois, DENNIS HASTERT, 3 minutes.

Mr. HASTERT. I thank the chairman, and I rise today in strong opposition to 1591.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to my friend from Wisconsin, I have a great deal of respect for the fights that he has fought on this floor for over 30 years, but we do disagree.

Supplemental spendings are intended to provide additional funding for programs and activities that are too urgent and pressing to wait for the regular appropriations process. To be clear, only emergency funds should be included in this supplemental. Period. So if Democrats are looking for an avenue to send money back to their districts, they should look to regular order.

Last year when the Senate tried to include over \$14 billion in non-emergency funds in the supplemental, House Republicans demanded a clean bill. And when the House sat down with the other body to negotiate a final bill, we accepted nothing less than a supplemental free of unrelated and non-emergency funding.

Why did we do that? Because we wanted to pledge the faithful support of this Congress to the members of the armed services serving in harm's way. This legislation should remain focused on the needs of the troops and not become a vehicle for extraneous spending and policy proposals.

In yet another show of a different way, the same Members who screamed for a straight up or down vote on minimum wage legislation just 1 year ago are today trying to attach that legislation to a wartime supplemental. And the very Members who voted to re-institute PAYGO rules just 2 months ago are here today casting fiscal responsibility to the wind.

This bill should be limited to necessary funding for our troops serving bravely in Iraq and around the world in the war on terror. I ask my honorable Democratic friends how the Democrats can on the one hand say they support our troops by providing them with money, but on the other undermine them by telegraphing a date for their withdrawal from Iraq.

Congress should under no circumstances micromanage the war and have politicians making decisions that should be left to our Commander in Chief and generals on the ground. Even The Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, hardly supporters of this administration, have editorialized that this legislation oversteps the bounds of Congress and both support a Presidential veto of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation and think long and hard about its consequences. This bill is fiscally irresponsible; it holds our troops hostage to nonemergency

spending and policy proposals, and it signals to the insurgents and terrorists around the world a lack of American will to do what is necessary to win the war on terror.

Vote “no” on H.R. 1591.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that we could do as the distinguished speaker has indicated and simply rubber-stamp what the administration asks for and do nothing else. But the fact is, what we are doing is exercising our responsibilities to provide checks and balances; Congress has every right to limit the terms and conditions under which appropriations are made, especially in wartime.

I would also point out that lest there be any doubt for the support of the troops, in addition to all of the funding that Mr. MURTHA has put in his section of the bill to meet the everyday combat and readiness needs of the troops, we have \$1.7 billion above the President's request for veterans health care; we have another \$1.7 billion above the President's request for defense health care. I think that makes quite clear that if you are concerned about the troops and concerned about the veterans, you will vote for this bill.

I will now yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS).

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, we have a moral obligation to support our troops while they are in combat and when they come home. That is why we fully fund our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and why we commit \$3.1 billion in this bill to build better barracks, housing, and training facilities here at home for our troops returning from war.

We also believe that supporting our veterans is a real cost of war, just as real as guns, tanks, and bullets. That is why we had \$1.7 billion in high-priority health care and benefits programs for our veterans, with a special focus on taking care of those who need us the most, those suffering from traumatic brain injury, PTSD, or loss of arms and legs. Our veterans' sacrifices don't end after they return home, and neither should our commitment to them.

For members of the Guard and Reserves in rural areas, we provide \$100 million for contracting out mental health care services so these brave citizen soldiers don't have to suffer even more by waiting weeks or months for health care they desperately need and deserve. For some, that timely care could mean the difference between health and depression; for others, the difference between life and death.

To prevent a Walter Reed Annex 18 tragedy from occurring in VA hospitals, we commit \$550 million to address serious maintenance and repair needs at those hospitals. Not one soldier, not one veteran, not one, should ever again have to endure the indignity of living in rat-infested, moldy housing.

The needs addressed in this bill are real, and our troops and veterans deserve no less. A vote for this bill is a vote for better health care and housing for America's heroes. By voting for this bill, we can honor and respect our troops, our veterans, and their families, not just with our words, but with our deeds.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) for 1 minute.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I understand my Democrat colleagues have the votes. I guess there was a lot of arm twisting last night. So congratulations on getting the votes necessary to pass this. But I am sad because this bill spends \$31 billion more than the President requested. It is a budget buster. And also I am kind of sad because I think a little bit about history.

You know, if George Washington had a Congress with the attitude of this Congress, we might very well have lost the Revolutionary War. If Abraham Lincoln had a Congress with the attitude of this Congress, we might very well have lost the Civil War. And I am sad for our valiant troops who you are going to jerk out of Iraq. It is a withdrawal bill. That is what you want to do, withdraw. And I am sad for our troops, our valiant troops, who want to win. Who want to win. And you are not going to let them if you have your way.

So I would just like to say, if I were talking to the President of the United States today, Mr. President, hang tough. Hang tough.

Mr. OBEY. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA).

Mr. MURTHA. Let me just say that the Revolutionary War, my great-great-grandfather fought in it. We fought our own war. In the Civil War, I have my great-grandfather's hat in my office. He fought against the South in the Civil War. We fought our own war. What we are trying to do in this legislation is force the Iraqis to fight their own war. That's what it's all about. Sixty-two Americans have died this month. We want to force the Iraqis to fight their own war.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, is it true that House Rule XXI, clause 9(d) defines an earmark as report language included primarily at the request of a Member recommending a specific amount of spending authority for an entity or targeted to a specific State, locality, or congressional district?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, does the language in the committee report directing \$35 million to risk mitigation project at NASA's Stennis facility constitute an earmark, as defined in rule XXI, clause 9(d)?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair discerns no question of order with respect to the statement that is included in the report. Questions concerning the content of that statement may be addressed by Members by engaging in debate.

Mr. FLAKE. So I can understand this, if the chairman of the committee simply says there are no earmarks, then the Chair is obligated to say there are no earmarks for the purpose of the rule?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. That is not a proper parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. FLAKE. Is it accurate to say that a Member could request an earmark through the chairman of the committee and have that earmark funded, and then the report come to the floor claiming that there are no earmarks in fact in the bill?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has stated a hypothetical question. The Chair does not respond to such questions.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, we have passed some good rules with regard to earmark reform and transparency, but we have found a way around them already, because when a report comes to the floor the rule states that it has to state if there is an earmark there, which Member requested it, and what it is for. Yet here we have something that is clearly an earmark for the Stennis facility and not an emergency by any definition. And my office actually called NASA, called the administration, asked was this requested. No, it wasn't; the request came from Congress. Clearly, an earmark request.

Yet the report comes to the floor; and because it says there are no earmarks, we have to take it for the purpose of the rule that there are no earmarks.

I am just wondering if this is how the appropriations cycle is going to go this year? Do the earmark rules mean anything? Or simply, can we get around them this way? What is to stop every Member from going to the chairman and saying, I have a request for this for my district. Will you simply put it in the overall request? Therefore, my name won't be attached to it.

We need to clean up these rules. If the chairman of the Appropriations Committee would clarify this, I would be most appreciative.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

The fact is that an earmark is something that is requested by an individual Member. This item was not requested by any individual Member; it was put in the bill by me. And it is there because we are simply doing the same thing with this facility that we are doing throughout the gulf coast, which is to make investments that mitigate against risk because of hurricanes.

This is a valuable Federal facility, and it certainly does not pass any definition of earmark that I know. I know the gentleman wants to see earmarks in every closet that he can find, but the fact is it is not an earmark. It was not asked for by any Members of Congress.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I can count on one hand the number of times I voted with this gentleman. He is on the other side of the aisle, but he couldn't get any time on that side. So I am pleased to recognize that all of us have the right to speak regardless of whether we agree with one or not.

I recognize Mr. KUCINICH of Ohio for 1 minute.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I rise in opposition to the bill.

Four years ago, Congress was told we had no alternative but to go to war. That was wrong. Now Congress is telling the American people, we have no alternative but to continue the war for just another year or two, and then we will be able to end the war. So war equals peace. I don't think so.

This war now has a momentum of its own, which has captured even people of good will who say they want peace but are going to vote to keep us at war. The same false logic that trapped Members into voting for the war is trapping Members into voting to continue the war.

I believe you cannot say you are for peace and vote to keep this war going. You cannot say you are for peace and facilitate the theft of Iraqi oil. You cannot say you are for peace and give the President money not just to keep this war going but to attack Iran if he so chooses.

If you want peace, vote for peace now. If you want peace, stop funding the war. If you want peace, stand for the truth.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will remind visitors in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House, and any manifestation whatsoever of approval or disapproval of these proceedings is in violation of the rules of the House.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds. Mr. Speaker, the characterization just placed on the previous speaker is flat out wrong.

Last night we had plenty of time for a lot of Members who didn't show up before the session expired. We called the gentleman from Ohio's office twice to inform him he had time available last night even though he was opposed to our position. He wasn't in a position to take it last night. So I would suggest that we have a different set of speakers today. We called on four Members of the caucus last night who were opposed to our position. And if the gentleman is suggesting that we have not called on Members who are opposed to our position, he is just flat out wrong.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBEY. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. KUCINICH. I want the gentleman to know that my office did make an attempt to get me time, that we were told that he didn't think there was any time, and that I came down here this morning seeking the opportunity.

Mr. OBEY. With all due respect, we called your office twice last night, and we were informed that you had already gone home.

Mr. KUCINICH. Actually, I was there until very late.

I want to thank my friend from California for yielding 1 minute and thank the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. OBEY. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

□ 1015

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, I rise in very strong support of this bill, and I want to thank Chairman OBEY and Chairman MURTHA for all of their hard work to put this legislation together.

I believe it is time to bring our troops home, to come home from Iraq, and I believe it is time for this Congress to support this legislation.

As the American soldiers begin their fifth year in this war of choice in Iraq, we confront the tragic fact that the Bush administration's preparation, planning and execution of this war has not kept faith with the enormous sacrifices our men and women in uniform and their families have made.

More than 3,200 American soldiers have died in Iraq, and close to 25,000 more have been seriously wounded. And Iraq is mired in a civil war, with tens of thousands of civilians killed, or even more internally displaced. Hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars have been squandered in this war that has left our military readiness in jeopardy, the All-Volunteer Army is at a breaking point, and the world's faith in America's leadership is gravely shaken.

The American people recognize President Bush's approach in Iraq for what it is—a failure. That is why we sent a message to Washington this past November to change the course, to end this war, to get out of Iraq. That is what the American people said in November.

Instead, this President, in all of his arrogance and all of his lying, chose to choose a surge.

Well, the time is now for the Congress to do something about that because the American people do not support a war in Iraq, and has no end in sight, and continues the tragic, unnecessary loss of life. And given the President's unwillingness to change course, it is incumbent upon the Congress to act. With this bill the Democrats in Congress are taking a stand against the President on behalf of the soldiers in this country and the American people.

The bill before the House would protect our troops on the battlefield and

at home, and require accountability from the Bush administration and the Iraqi Government, and set a responsible timeline for the phased redeployment of U.S. troops with a date certain by September 2008 at the latest. We must support this legislation. And again, I thank the authors of this legislation.

I rise in strong support of this bill and I encourage all of my colleagues who believe it is time for our troops to come home from Iraq to support it.

As American soldiers begin their fifth year of this war of choice in Iraq, we confront the tragic fact that the Bush Administration's preparation, planning, and execution of this war has not kept faith with the enormous sacrifices our men and women in uniform and their families have made.

More than 3,200 American soldiers have died in Iraq and close to 25,000 more have been seriously injured. Iraq is mired in a civil war, with tens of thousands of civilians killed and even more internally displaced. Hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars have been squandered in this war that has left our military readiness in jeopardy, the all-volunteer Army at the breaking point, and the world's faith in America's world leadership gravely shaken.

The American people recognize President Bush's approach in Iraq for what it is—a failure. That's why they sent a message to Washington this past November to change course.

Americans do not support a war in Iraq that has no end in sight and continues the tragic and unnecessary loss of life. Given the President's unwillingness to change course, it is incumbent on Congress to act. With this bill, Democrats in Congress are taking a stand against the President but on behalf of our soldiers and the American people.

The bill before the House would protect our troops on the battlefield and at home, require accountability from the Bush Administration and the Iraqi government, and set a responsible timeline for a phased redeployment of U.S. troops—with a date certain, by September 2008 at the latest, for U.S. combat troops to be redeployed from Iraq.

Adoption of our plan is the answer to America's plea to bring this war to an end and turn away from the President's bottomless commitment to U.S. participation in the Iraqi civil war. Our plan provides a responsible, phased plan for requiring the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. And voting yes on this bill will clearly show to the American people that a majority in Congress clearly stand with them in their desire to bring an end to the tragic U.S. occupation of Iraq.

My colleagues must understand that if they oppose the war, if they oppose spending more money on the war, if they oppose continuing the tragic loss of life in Iraq, then they must support this bill.

The only alternative to this bill that could garner enough votes to pass would be a supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war with no accountability, no timetables, and no end. That is the reality.

I know that the majority of the House opposes the continuation of the war. There are differences over strategy, on how best to achieve our goal on behalf of the country, on behalf of the soldiers, and on behalf of their families.

Defeating this bill would prolong the war. Defeating this bill would enable the President to continue to his irresponsible and deadly failures. Defeating this bill would send a message to the American people that Congress is not listening to them.

The President has run out of excuses for his failures in Iraq.

The American people have correctly run out of patience waiting for him to change course.

And America's soldiers have done everything asked of them and everything that could be expected of them.

It is time for a new direction.

The bill before the House provides a new direction for America. And it is the only bill that can take us in that direction.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, how is it in order to continue to consider H.R. 1591 when rule XXI, clause 9 of the House clearly states that, and I quote, "it shall not be in order to consider a bill or joint resolution reported by a committee unless the report includes a list of congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits and limited tariff benefits in the bill or in the report, and the name of any Member, Delegate or Resident Commissioner who submitted a request to the committee for each respective item included in such list, or a statement that the proposition contains no congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits or tariff benefits"?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. No Member rose to a point of order at the appropriate point in time.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I make a point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his point of order.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, is there a list of congressional earmarks with this?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman stating a point of order?

Mr. MCHENRY. Point of order. House rule XXI, clause 9 states, and if I shall repeat, or if the gentleman would, if the Speaker would look at House rule XXI, clause 9, is there not cause for action?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's point of order is not timely.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, at what time would it be timely for consideration?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. It would be timely at the outset of consideration of the matter.

Mr. MCHENRY. Further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Am I correct to interpret the Chair's statement to mean that even if an earmark is clearly present in the bill under consideration today, that the mere inclusion of a statement certifying that there are no earmarks within the provision effectively neuters the rule?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has posed a hypothetical question. The Chair does not respond to such questions.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, it is a fact, not a hypothetical. This bill contains earmarks. And the rule under the House is that—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is engaging in debate and not stating a point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, it simply takes a waiver submitted by the chairman to make this rule, this no earmark rule, in fact, noneffective; is that not correct?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is reminded again he is engaging in debate and not stating a point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. How does the Chair understand the definition term of "earmark" as it relates to rule XXI, clause 9?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair does not provide advisory opinions.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Under the rules of the House, what is an earmark?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair does not respond to requests for advisory opinions.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I have a further parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman shall state his point of parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, according to the definition of an earmark, as I interpret it, because the Chair won't provide a definition, how does section 2101 of the legislation before us today—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is engaging in debate and not stating a point of parliamentary inquiry. The gentleman is no longer recognized.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL).

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today this Congress, the 110th Congress, faces an historic vote, a vote to truly change the direction of the Iraqi conflict.

Let us review the cost America has borne in 4 years: 3,200 lives have been lost, 25,000 of our citizens have been injured, and nearly a half a trillion dollars have been spent, and America's reputation around the world has been sullied.

And under the President's leadership, his Iraqi policy comes down to something very simple: more troops, more money, more time, more of the same. That is it.

Now, there is a lot of rhetoric going around. We fund our troops. You fund the troops. There is one fundamental difference: We require the Iraqis to bear responsibility for Iraq, and you provide them and the President another blank check for another year. And that is the fundamental difference, whether you will bring accountability and responsibility to the Iraqis to stand up for Iraq.

Now, some bemoan and say we are micromanaging. I would say to you, you rubber-stamped 4 years of mismanagement. Not enough troops, not a plan for the occupation and elimination of the Iraqi Army has brought us in from in search of WMD to policing a sectarian civil war.

And when you talk, as the President said on January 10, that he wants the Iraqis to meet his benchmarks, but you don't have any benchmarks or any accountability for Iraq, I can only say one thing, as we say in Chicago, "You're all hat and no cattle."

It is time, after 4 years and an unbelievable cost across America, borne mostly by our troops and their families and our military, that we ask the Iraqis to do for Iraq what they have asked us to do for them for 4 years, and that is to be accountable for their own future.

And I am proud that we have finally done something. We will fund the troops, and we will also demand that Iraq stand up for Iraq's future and stop leaning on America alone.

And we have done something that is so important that has been missing in this policy, and that is not only a new direction, but fundamentally bringing the responsibility and accountability to the Iraqis, which is why many in the Armed Forces are happy we are forcing Iraqis to do for Iraq's future what they have asked us to do, which is stop policing their civil war, but demand accountability, bring a new direction to this, because after 4 years, more troops, more money, more time is only rubber-stamping more of the same.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, could I request the amount of time on each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 42½ minutes. The gentleman from Wisconsin has 40 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) for 1 minute.

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is truly incomprehensible that there are those who believe that the best course of action in the face of a determined enemy is to tell them that we are less determined. Yet that is exactly what this Iraq supplemental financing bill does.

What message do we send our brave military men and women when we won't guarantee them the resources and the equipment that they need without including a litany of restrictive and arbitrary timetables?

What will our soldiers on the front lines of this war think when they hear they have been sold for salmon fisheries and spinach growers, money used to buy votes?

This Iraq supplemental bill is just one more step in what has become a long list of unprecedented attempts by this majority to accept defeat at any cost.

For those of us in Washington, we get to face this moment in the warmth and the comfort of our homes and offices. For so many Americans, they will face this moment in the harsh reality of a war zone. We must not forget what is at stake. Our military will not, and the American people will not.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS).

(Mr. DICKS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to command my colleagues, Mr. OBEY and Mr. MURTHA, for the excellent work on the supplemental appropriations bill that they have brought to the House floor. The House leadership has worked hard to put together the votes to pass this legislation.

This bill funds the troops. We have given them extra funds to deal with the critical issues of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. We need to clean up the mess at Walter Reed and the other hospitals around the country, including the VA hospitals. There is money in this bill to provide extra staff, nurses and to clean up these facilities.

It is critical that we put pressure on the Iraqi Government to end the civil war. The Maliki government must get the message that the American people do not have unlimited patience. General Petraeus has said that we cannot end this war with only a military solution. We need the Iraqis to resolve the conflict amongst themselves. We need them to fix their Constitution, pass necessary oil legislation, and end the sectarian violence. The benchmarks in this bill will help them to accomplish these objectives.

I hope that General Petraeus is successful in reducing the violence in

Baghdad and the surrounding area. I hope that U.S. forces embedded with Iraqi forces can stop the sectarian killing. Without political reconciliation, we cannot stop the sectarian violence and the al Qaeda-led terrorist attacks. We also need an economic recovery program across Iraq to create badly needed jobs.

This bill sets a timetable. It puts pressure on the Maliki government, and I think it is the right bill at the right time to change our Iraq policy and to bring the troops home in a reasonable period of time.

I hope we can stabilize Iraq, but we can only do it with the effort of the Iraqi Government and their people.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 22, 2007]

CONGRESS'S CHALLENGE ON IRAQ

The House of Representatives now has a chance to lead the nation toward a wiser, more responsible Iraq policy. It is scheduled to vote this week on whether to impose benchmarks for much-needed political progress on the Iraqi government—and link them to the continued presence of American combat forces. The bill also seeks to lessen the intolerable strains on American forces, requiring President Bush to certify that units are fit for battle before sending any troops to Iraq. Both of these requirements are long overdue. The House should vote yes, by an overwhelming, bipartisan margin.

It is normally the president who provides the leadership for American foreign policy and decides when there needs to be a change of course. But Mr. Bush stubbornly refuses to do either, and the country cannot afford to wait out the rest of his term. Given Mr. Bush's failure, Congress has a responsibility to do all it can to use Washington's remaining leverage to try to lessen the chaos that will likely follow an American withdrawal—no matter when it happens—and to ensure that the credibility and readiness of the United States military is preserved.

House Democrats have wisely moved beyond their earlier infatuation with mere deadlines. The benchmarks spelled out in this legislation, which also provides the next round of money for the war, require that the Iraqi government stop shielding and encouraging the Shiite militias that are helping drive the killing. United States and Iraqi security forces must be allowed to pursue all extremists, Shiite and Sunni, disarm sectarian militias and provide "evenhanded security for all Iraqis."

The benchmarks also require the Iraqi government to take measurable steps toward national reconciliation: equitably distributing oil revenues, opening up more political and economic opportunities to the Sunni minority and amending the constitution to discourage further fragmentation.

The legislation does not settle for more empty promises—from Mr. Bush and the Iraqis. It would require the president to provide Congress, by July, with an initial detailed report on Iraq's efforts to meet these benchmarks. By October, the Iraqi government would have to complete a specific set of legislative and constitutional steps. Failure to meet these deadlines would trigger the withdrawal of all American combat forces—but not those training Iraqis or fighting Al Qaeda—to be concluded in April 2008. If the benchmarks were met, American combat forces would remain until the fall of 2008.

The measure would also bar sending any unit to Iraq that cannot be certified as fully ready. It sets a reasonable 365-day limit on combat tours for the Army and a shorter 210-

day combat tour limit for the Marines. As for how many troops can remain in Iraq—until the House's deadlines for withdrawal—the legislation imposes no reduction on the level of roughly 132,000 in place at the start of this year.

Critics will complain that the House is doing the Pentagon's planning. But the Pentagon and Mr. Bush have clearly failed to protect America's ground forces from the ever more costly effects of extended, accelerated and repeated deployments.

If Iraq's leaders were truly committed to national reconciliation and reining in their civil war, there would be no need for benchmarks or deadlines. But they are not. If Mr. Bush were willing to grasp Iraq's horrifying reality, he would be the one imposing benchmarks, timetables and readiness rules. He will not, so Congress must. American troops should not be trapped in the middle of a blood bath that neither Mr. Bush nor Iraq's leaders have the vision or the will to halt.

[From the New York Times, Mar. 21, 2007]

THE TROIKA AND THE SURGE

(By Thomas L. Friedman)

President Bush's Iraq surge policy is about a month old now, and there is only one thing you can say about it for certain: no matter what anyone in Congress, the military or the public has to say, it's going ahead. The president has the authority to do it and the veto power to prevent anyone from stopping him. Therefore, there's only one position to have on the surge anymore: hope that it works.

Does this mean that Democrats in Congress who are trying to shut down the war and force a deadline should take the advice of critics and shut up and let the surge play out?

No, just the opposite. I would argue that for the first time we have—by accident—the sort of balanced policy trio that had we had it in place four years ago might have spared us the mess of today. It's the Pelosi-Petraeus-Bush troika.

I hope the Democrats, under Speaker Nancy Pelosi, keep pushing to set a deadline for withdrawal from Iraq, because they are providing two patriotic services that the Republicans failed to offer in the previous four years: The first is policy discipline. Had Republicans spent the previous four years regularly questioning Don Rumsfeld's ignorant bromides and demanding that the White House account for failures in Iraq, we might have had the surge in 2003—when it was obvious we did not have enough troops on the ground—rather than in 2007, when the chances of success are much diminished.

Because the Republicans controlled the House and Senate, and because many conservatives sat in mute silence the last four years, the administration could too easily ignore its critics and drag out policies in Iraq that were not working. With the Democrats back in Congressional control, that is no longer possible.

The other useful function Speaker Pelosi and her colleagues are performing is to give the president and Gen. David Petraeus, our commander in Iraq, the leverage of a deadline without a formal deadline. How so? The surge can't work without political reconciliation among Iraqi factions, which means Sunni-Shiite negotiations—and such negotiations are unlikely to work without America having the "leverage" of telling the parties that if they don't compromise, we will leave. (Deadlines matter. At some point, Iraqis have to figure this out themselves.)

Since Mr. Bush refuses to set a deadline, Speaker Pelosi is the next best thing. Do not underestimate how useful it is for General Petraeus to be able to say to Iraqi politicians: "Look guys, Pelosi's mad as hell—and

she has a big following! I don't want to quit, but Americans won't stick with this forever. I only have a few months."

Speaker Pelosi: Keep the heat on.

As for General Petraeus, I have no idea whether his military strategy is right, but at least he has one—and he has stated that by "late summer" we should know if it's working. As General Petraeus told the BBC last week, "I have an obligation to the young men and women in uniform out here, that if I think it's not going to happen, to tell them that it's not going to happen, and there needs to be a change."

We need to root for General Petraeus to succeed, and hold him to those words if he doesn't—not only for the sake of the soldiers on the ground, but also so that Mr. Bush is not allowed to drag the war out until the end of his term, and then leave it for his successor to unwind.

But how will General Petraeus or Congress judge if the surge is working? It may be obvious, but it may not be. It will likely require looking beneath the surface calm of any Iraqi neighborhood—where violence has been smothered by the surge of U.S. troops—and trying to figure out: what will happen here when those U.S. troops leave? Remember, enough U.S. troops can quiet any neighborhood for a while. The real test is whether a self-sustaining Iraqi army and political consensus are being put in place that can hold after we leave.

It will also likely require asking: Are the Shiite neighborhoods quieting down as a result of reconciliation or because their forces are just lying low so the U.S. will focus on whacking the Sunnis—in effect, carrying out the civil war on the Shiites' behalf, so that when we leave they can dominate more easily?

When you're sitting on a volcano, it is never easy to tell exactly what is happening underneath—or what will happen if you move. But those are the judgments we may soon have to make. In the meantime, since Bush is going to be Bush, let Pelosi be Pelosi and Petraeus be Petraeus—and hope for the best. For now, we don't have much choice.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER).

(Mr. NEUGEBAUER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I hope today, as we take this vote, that people will understand really what is at stake here.

I have heard a lot of discussion today, and some Members are going to go back home and say, well, I voted for this bill and against the troops because I brought home some things for the people in my district.

But today this vote is not about bringing home bacon for the people in your district. It is about American security.

My family was in New York on 9/11, and my daughter-in-law and her mother were supposed to be at the World Trade Center on 9/11. So when I take this vote this afternoon or at noon, whenever we have this, let me tell you the reason why RANDY NEUGEBAUER is going to be voting "no." Because I am looking forward, not at what we are doing today and what is going to, who is going to be able to take what projects home, but I am looking forward to the security of America. I am

looking into the eyes of my grandsons Nathan and Noah and saying, Nathan and Noah, I didn't leave America safe and secure for you.

This is about security. 9/11 is a real event. America was attacked. We have been attacked before. We know this enemy is going to come back and attack us again.

This bill, this vote, is about keeping America safe. So when Members go home and brag about their vote on this, I hope that they go home and brag about the fact that they cast a vote that will ensure a safe and secure America because, you see, if you take all of these projects home, and there is no security in America, there is no America.

I urge my colleagues not to vote for this bill.

I rise today in strong support of our troops and their mission in Iraq.

Ten days ago, I returned from my third trip to Iraq. From the generals to the privates, the message I heard from our troops in Iraq was "let us do our job so we can win." And that is precisely what we should be doing here today.

Today, we should be working to provide our military with the tools and resources needed to attain victory . . .

Today, we should be showing our troops that we are behind them 100 percent . . . And today, we should be showing the world that America has the resolve to stand up to terrorist threats even when the going gets tough.

Instead, this ill-advised legislation does just the opposite. By putting restrictions on our military commanders and the President . . . and setting a firm timeline and final date for withdrawal, this bill undermines the war effort, sends the wrong message to our troops, and telegraphs our war strategy to the enemy.

Our Constitution is clear in that it places the responsibility for conducting the war in the hands of a single Commander-in-Chief, not Congress. Our Founding Fathers wisely understood that having 535 politicians in Washington attempt to micromanage a war is a recipe for disaster.

I am further disappointed that the majority has jeopardized the success of the drought relief package for farmers and ranchers.

I strongly support drought relief and have been calling for federal assistance since last summer. However, as much as I know producers in my district support disaster assistance, I cannot in good conscience support this supplemental because of the flawed military strategy that the majority is pursuing in this bill.

□ 1030

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY), the subcommittee Chair on Foreign Operations.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1591 and commend Chairman OBEY, Chairman MURTHA, and our Speaker for putting together a bill that protects our troops, responds to the will of the American people, and preserves our Nation's interests.

Our men and women in uniform have served with honor and courage, but we

are not doing our part. Our Armed Forces are not battle-ready, nor is their mission clear and achievable. There is no definition of victory. The nature of the battle has changed, and our troops now find themselves policing a bloody civil war. It is well past time to set clear parameters for this war.

Since the beginning, this war and reconstruction efforts have been ill-managed. Just yesterday the Iraq IG reported yet again on how unprepared the administration was for the task of reconstruction. The Defense Department had no strategy for restoring government institutions, establishing security, or rebuilding infrastructure, and the State Department was cut completely out of the work.

There continues to be a lack of coordination and strategy to achieve our objectives. Putting billions of dollars more into this war without any parameters and risking the lives of more of our brave men and women is not only foolish; it is immoral. As the New York Times editorial noted on Thursday, if the President won't step up to the task of setting benchmarks and ensuring the safety of our troops, then it falls to us, this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does just that. We are stepping up to our responsibilities. This legislation does not micro-manage the war, as many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle claim. It is a very carefully considered approach to bringing accountability to the execution of the war and to the reconstruction efforts. Moreover, it sets a date certain for the end of this war so we can bring our troops home.

No amount of American blood or treasure can help Iraq if the Iraqis don't help themselves. The Maliki government must exhibit the political will to confront extremists on both sides of the Sunni-Shia divide, to give all segments of society a stake in Iraq's future, and to put Iraqi revenues towards the hard task of reconstruction. Congress didn't pull these benchmarks from the air. They were put forth by the Iraqis and by President Bush in his January 10 speech.

Mr. Speaker, we are already into the fifth year of this war. The bill provides the funding the President requested, but it does not do so unconditionally. This bill sets benchmarks, provides a date certain for withdrawal.

The days of open-ended commitment and unilateral check-writing privileges are over. This bill deals with Iraq responsibly, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. McHENRY. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. McHENRY. Mr. Speaker, is a point of order in order against page 87, the subsection appropriating \$35 million to NASA, which I believe to be an earmark?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time for making a point of order on this issue has passed. The Chair does not provide advisory opinions.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. MCHENRY. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his point of order.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, according to the definition of an earmark under rule XXI, clause 9, the section 3103 of this legislation which appropriates \$35 million to spinach growers, does this not qualify as an earmark under rule XXI, clause 9?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has not stated a point of order.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. MCHENRY. Further parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, according to the definition of an earmark under rule XXI, clause 9, which the Chair recognizes from the House rules, how does section 3104, which appropriates \$20 million to a particular agricultural interest in a particular district, not qualify as an earmark?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has not stated a parliamentary inquiry. The gentleman may engage in debate on that subject if yielded to, but the Chair will not recognize a Member for debate under the guise of a parliamentary inquiry.

The gentleman is no longer recognized.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, on Monday I spoke on this floor about a conflict I had in supporting this measure because I want peace in our world and I want our troops to come home. I asked for my constituents to let me know how they felt.

Hundreds of people responded with e-mails and phone calls, and I appreciate each of them. They want us to support our troops. They want to bring our troops home from Iraq, and they want to take care of our veterans.

The most effective way to accomplish those things is to vote for this bill. This will be the first step in ending the war in Iraq, taking care of our veterans, but at the same time, supporting our troops.

I am proud to be a Member of this Congress and to vote “aye” today on this bill.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, first let me compliment my friend from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the chairman of the

Appropriations Committee; and the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), for the excellent work that they have done. And we thank our minority for working with us on this bill.

The purpose of the Members of Congress front and center is to provide for the common defense of our country. I must tell you how concerned and worried I am about the readiness and state of readiness of the United States Army based upon testimony and briefings that we have had within the Armed Services Committee.

Readiness is based upon equipment and based upon people able to do their job as defenders in uniform. This is a serious situation in which we find ourselves. This bill is a major step toward helping our readiness.

It is our job not just to appropriate money for today's concerns, whether it be in the Middle East or elsewhere. It is our job to make sure that those in uniform can protect the interests of America in the days and years ahead.

In the last 30 years, we have had 12 military conflicts in which our military associates have been involved. What does the future hold? We don't know. But as sure as God made little green apples, there will be threats that we need to deter or challenges that we need to fight in the days and years ahead. We must have a ready force in all services and my deep concern for the United States Army causes that to come into question in our capability.

In this we provide money for the real war in Afghanistan, the Strategic Reserve Fund, which supports training, not just operations but repair of equipment, purchase of equipment, and expenses to improve the readiness of the nondeployed military forces.

I am deeply concerned about the readiness of our forces in the days and years ahead. This bill will help immeasurably in that first step toward restoring readiness for our United States Army. And this is no small thing. A vote against this is a vote against those uncertainties of the future as well as where we are today involved in conflict.

Military health care is very important, and we look at that in this bill solidly. Veterans' health care, military housing allowances. We do so many good things in this bill for our military.

Let us not let the readiness of our United States Army suffer as a result of not passing this all-important legislation.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2½ minutes to the ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. MCCREERY).

Mr. MCCREERY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. LEWIS for yielding me this time.

In my almost 19 years in the United States House of Representatives, I have cast many difficult votes. And I have often spoken to groups of constituents over the years, and in the course of

their asking me questions, inevitably one of the questions will be, What is the most difficult vote you have taken as a Member of the House?

And I am always quick to respond, even though there have been many difficult votes, clearly the most difficult vote I have had to make as a Member of the House is to vote to send our troops into war.

And certainly the vote that this House made to authorize the President to send our troops to Iraq this most recent time was a very difficult vote for all of us. Some of us, it seems, have changed our minds and wish we hadn't cast that vote. But the fact is we did cast that vote. We voted in the majority to start this war.

I believe, based on my reading of history, my studies of past engagements, military engagements, it would be a tremendous mistake for the Congress of the United States to attempt to micromanage this war and bring it to a conclusion through artificially constraining decisions on the battlefield.

I have spoken face to face with the President of the United States about this war. I know he is trying his best to bring this war to a conclusion. He is trying his best to make sure that the interests of the United States, as well as the interests of the people of Iraq, are served as he plans strategy and works with our military leaders to plot the best course for ending this war and preserving and serving the interests of the United States.

He has a new strategy in play. It seems to be working. We are getting favorable reports from the commanders in the field.

Let us give this Commander in Chief and his military leaders a chance to serve this country, to serve Iraq, and end this in the best possible way for the United States. Let us not try to micromanage from the Congress, with 435 in the House and 100 in the Senate, telling our leaders how to conduct this war and when to end it. That is the wrong course of action for this country.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California has quite a bit more time remaining. I suggest he run some off the clock.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, may we hear what the time left is on both sides, please.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 38 minutes, and the gentleman from Wisconsin has 31½ minutes.

□ 1045

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY).

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from California.

Mr. Speaker, we have an interesting bill before us here today. It appropriates \$100 million for shrimp, it appropriates \$100 million for citrus growers, it appropriates \$74 million for a particular type of peanut storage and

\$25 million for spinach. It even appropriates \$50 million for a Capitol Hill power plant. And they do this in the name of funding the troops. I think this is, again, Washington hypocrisy at work.

The most egregious part of this bill, I find, is that there are billions of dollars in this bill for livestock, which the American people, Mr. Speaker, should know is literally pork for pork.

And it is all about getting votes together to fund the troops in harm's way, but instead of funding the troops in harm's way, they are funding pork-barrel projects here in the United States.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, this is wrong for our troops in battle, but it is a great gift for Washington Democrat politicians who are in power here in the House today.

This is a failure to understand what "emergency" means, what "war" means and the fight we have going in Iraq.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and for his hard work on this and other work that we do here.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the debate on this emergency spending bill has provided the service of reminding Americans exactly what is at stake in Iraq, the prospects of victory, the consequences of defeat, and a better appreciation of how it is we do everything we possibly can to secure and support our men and women in harm's way.

House Republicans, Mr. Speaker, asked the Speaker and her colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to produce a clean and straightforward supplemental emergency bill, a package worthy of our troops' hard work and dedication, with help we could deploy to the front lines as quickly as possible.

What we got instead was a poorly assembled wish-list of nonemergency spending requests wrapped in a date-certain declaration of defeat, a confirmation to our enemies that if they hang on just a bit longer, we will be out of their way soon.

I happen to believe the stakes in Iraq are too high and the sacrifices made by our military personnel and their families too great to be content with anything but success. But the bill brought before us today isn't written with victory in mind. Its prevailing tone is one of defeat, and its abiding premise is that America's mission in Iraq is over and our troops' continued status there is without merit. And just to drive the point home, it forces on General Petraeus and his commanders on the ground constant status and reporting requirements, designed not only to undermine their basic operational authority, but to hasten a withdrawal of troop support from the region.

When the leaders of the majority were offered the opportunity for a se-

cure briefing from General Petraeus a few days ago, they said no. When the majority was offered a briefing from Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice and Secretary Pace in the last few days, they said no again.

Does anyone think that demoting our best generals to administrative assistants represents our best chance of achieving our goals in this region? Does anyone believe our commanders in the field have been given too much authority and too much flexibility to get the job done?

Ultimate victory in Iraq is a proposition that is far from guaranteed, Mr. Speaker, but ultimate failure in Iraq is, if this attempt to co-opt the essential command-and-control responsibilities of our commanders in the field ever actually becomes law.

Mr. Speaker, this emergency supplemental includes billions of dollars in nonemergency spending, offered as an excuse to vote for a bill that guarantees our defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I urge a "no" vote on this bill and ask my colleagues to join me in sending a message of strength and resolve to our friends and our enemies and, most importantly, to our troops in the field.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE).

(Mr. PRICE of North Carolina asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill as chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, advocating for the bill's acceleration of programs critical to the integrity of our borders and the safety of the American people. These are carefully crafted, legitimate emergency security measures, and there is no good reason to wait further to make this country more secure.

Today, however, I want to address the broader bill, speaking colleague to colleague, mindful and respectful of the struggles with conscience so evident among us in recent days.

I did not support originally giving the authority to the President to wage war in Iraq. I have introduced legislation calling for an end to that authorization. But I understand there is a wide range of opinion on where we should go from here, and there are many who believe that this bill, which takes a major step towards changing our course in Iraq, either goes too far or not far enough.

Our discussions on this issue have brought to mind lessons from my days in divinity school and as a teacher of ethics, lessons I believe are helpful in sorting out what it means and should mean to follow one's conscience on a matter such as this.

On the first day of Ethics 101, we learn that we often face two kinds of moral choice in life. One has to do with the morality of an act itself, which is

what many colleagues are referring to when they say they are "voting their conscience" on what we know is an imperfect bill.

The second kind of moral choice requires us to consider the consequences of our acts. That is also an exercise of conscience, perhaps an even more demanding one.

Think about the consequences. What if the consequence of voting "no" is to let slip away the best chance we may have for a long time to compel a change of course in Iraq? What if a consequence is the further crippling of this House's influence in this country's foreign and defense policy? What if the consequence of a "no" vote is to allow the President to continue on the same failed policy course? Are those not matters of conscience?

Some talk as though we should simply square the contents of this bill against an ideal and vote accordingly. No, I am afraid moral choice and our obligations as public servants run deeper than that.

Please, don't sell short a vote in favor of this bill as though it were a mere practical or political accommodation. By all means, treat this vote as an act of conscience, but an act based on a searching consideration of the full range of consequences that may result.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HOBSON), a member of the Defense Subcommittee.

Mr. HOBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591, the Fiscal Year 2007 U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Supplemental Appropriations Act, because, in my opinion, it sends the wrong message to our troops, our allies and the Iraqi people, who really want to take care of and control of their own country.

In my opinion, this bill will tie the hands of the commanders in the field by micromanaging from Washington the military decisions that those commanders ought to be making on the ground. Further, by setting a date-certain timeline requirement for withdrawing our troops, in my opinion it will endanger U.S. personnel and give our enemies a date to wait us out.

Mr. Speaker, this bill not only sends the wrong message to our troops about their efforts to bring stability to Iraq, it sends the wrong one to our allies throughout the world. In my opinion, it says that if you bloody us enough, we are going to walk away.

If we walk away, our credibility is gone in the world. We will be abandoning the thousands of Iraqis who risked their lives and voted for freedom, and risk bringing dishonor to the men and women who have fought and died in this war.

One thing that strikes me about the debate of this bill and the recent one on H. Res. 63, the Iraqi war resolution, is that there is little or no discussion on what the Iraqis are willing to do to bring themselves closer to taking control of their own country.

Earlier this year I went on a bipartisan congressional delegation trip to Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. While we met with U.S. troops and commanders, we also had a chance to meet with the leaders of those countries, including Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki. He told us if his country had the command and control, equipment and our backing, the Iraqis could begin to take over their own security in 3 to 6 months and that we could be able to redeploy 50,000 U.S. troops at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that President Maliki has the tools and resources to be successful. For those who are looking for a timely withdrawal of troops, why shouldn't we be focusing on giving him and his plan a chance, rather than setting arbitrary withdrawal deadlines? The quicker that the Iraqi people take control of their country, the quicker U.S. troops can begin to withdraw with dignity. This bill, I don't believe, moves us further in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to send our own message to the leadership of this body that our troops and commanders in the field deserve a bill that will support them in their efforts to bring stability to Iraq.

Finally, I am troubled by the way the new majority has restricted the debate, for even while we are encouraging the Iraqi people and their leaders to become more democratic, the House of Representatives, in my opinion, is moving in the opposite direction.

During the last elections, much was made about maintaining a fair and open process in the people's House, and I shared that. Frankly, I don't think we did when we were in the majority enough on that. This bill, however, is back to even worse than that because it is being considered under conditions that are neither fair nor open. Specifically, no amendments are allowed, and no alternatives can be considered on this most important bill.

Mr. Speaker, a bill with such historical importance needs to have open and fair debate. That is the way this type of bill has always been considered, I thought, before. That is what the American people were promised last fall. I, frankly, deeply regret that this is not now occurring today.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense.

(Mr. MURTHA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MURTHA. Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing people say that we have got to give this a chance. For 4 years we have given this a chance. For 4 years we have had our troops overseas.

Here is the problem that we face. Every time that we give them a chance, they disappear. For instance, they said that the Iraqis are going to lead this surge. Let me tell you, 50 percent of the Iraqis in the units aren't

showing up. So the Americans have to take over. We have to pay the bill.

The Europeans, this is just as important to the Europeans as it is to us, and the Europeans benefit from the oil that comes from Iraq, yet they are not really participating to any significant amount, versus the first war where they participated significantly. George Bush I got a coalition together.

The problem we have with what is going on, this is not General Petraeus' war, this is the administration's war. This administration has put us in a position where the military has to actually violate their own guidelines in order to get troops to Iraq.

I knew over a year ago we didn't have the numbers of troops we needed to sustain this deployment, and the surge makes it worse. The worst thing we can do is send troops, and if you vote against this, you are going to vote for sending troops into war without being fully mission-capable, without the training and equipment they need, and that is absolutely unacceptable.

I note to the Congress and I note to the people sitting on that side who worked so hard to fund the military, we put \$70 billion in last time that the administration did not even ask for.

We have 36,000 additional troops in here for the overall picture. So if you vote against this, you are voting against those 36,000 troops, for the total number of troops that need to be not deployed, but need to be available to be deployed.

Our reserves are in desperate shape. Our Strategic Reserve, when we started this war with C-1, they are now in the lowest state of readiness. They couldn't be deployed. Only two divisions would be deployed. So we have a lot of work to do.

And I say to the Members, you are voting against supporting the troops if you vote against the money that goes to the troops and the money that has already been sent or is going to be sent. They are going to run out in April, and we need to get this bill through.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Members on both sides of the aisle to vote for this legislation.

□ 1100

Mr. LEWIS OF California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BARRETT).

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I don't know what to say. I will say this, H.R. 1591, when it comes up in 1 hour or 45 minutes, I'm going to vote against it. But I want to say two things to two groups out there. Number one, to the American people, I want to say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I can't stop runaway fiscal spending. I can't stop a House that is out of control. I'm sorry for that. But more importantly, I want to say I'm sorry to my soldiers, because I cannot do enough to protect you.

Men and women halfway across this world laying their life on the line for

me and my family and my children and my country and everything I believe in, I can't do enough to help you, and I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

I will fight today, I will fight tomorrow, I will fight every day I am a United States Congressman for my soldiers and my people and my country. I will not give up. All I ask is don't give up on them; don't give up on me; and don't give up on us.

Mr. OBEY. I yield 1 minute to the distinguished majority leader, Mr. HOYER.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I share the previous speaker's sorrow. I'm sorry that the policies pursued by this administration have not done what he wanted to do, support our troops. We sent too few, we equipped them too little, and we have left them too long and trained them for too short a time. Yes, I'm sorry.

The American public expects us, the Congress of the United States, to do something, not simply to say yes to failed policies, but to, on their behalf, speak out and try to take us in a new direction.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a Member of this body on either side of the aisle who does not pray for our success in Iraq and who does not pray for the safe return of our brave service men and women. However, after the loss of more than 3,200 American soldiers and more than 24,000 injured and after the expenditure of more than \$400 billion on a war now entering its fifth year that Secretary Rumsfeld told us would take just a few months. With open arms and cheering in the streets, this war would be over and the mission would have been accomplished almost 4 years ago, said the President of the United States, who now asks us to rubber-stamp, no strings attached. Do it, as Mr. PUTNAM said, before supper. That is not what the American public expects of us. They expect better. They expect a new direction. They expect us to think, not simply say, amen, Mr. President.

The Defense Department says: "Some elements of the situation in Iraq are properly described as a civil war." None of us who voted for the original authorization voted to put our troops in the middle of a civil war, not one of us.

The Iraq Government has failed to meet political goals. It is our responsibility to ask them to do so because we want to support our troops. And if the Iraqis do not meet their responsibilities, our troops will not be supported. A National Intelligence Estimate concludes that this war is increasing, this is the National Intelligence Estimate, increasing the global war on terror. The Army Chief of Staff has issued strong warnings about the effect of the war on America's overall military readiness. Mr. MURTHA has talked about that for at least the last 2 years.

My friend, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, with whom I served for a quarter of a century on that committee, he must share

the concern about military readiness that all of us share and know that we are eroding our military readiness every day. Thus, the question before the Members today is this: Will we change direction in Iraq, or will we continue to stay the course with a failing policy?

Mr. Speaker, I believe the answer is clear. It is long past time that this Congress assert itself and assist on accountability and a new direction in Iraq. More blank checks from this Congress would constitute an abdication of our responsibility and our duty. Four years of abdication is enough. It is time, my fellow Members, for Congress to assert its support of our troops by adopting policies that will keep them safe and enhance their success.

This legislation, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, will protect our troops, requiring deployments to adhere to existing Defense Department standards, not our standards, Defense Department standards, standards for training, equipment and armor, while allowing the President to waive these standards, which are his own, the administration's standards, if he believes it necessary. That is the right thing for us to do.

The bill also holds the Iraqi Government accountable, measuring its performance by the standards President Bush outlined in his January 10 speech, not our standards for Iraq, but the benchmarks that the President of the United States has set. But if they are only rhetorical benchmarks with nothing behind them to require that action, then we are wasting our time in supporting our troops because that will not do it.

The bill provides a responsible strategy for a phased redeployment of U.S. forces and refocusing our efforts on fighting al Qaeda. That is who attacked us, not the Sunni or Shia, but al Qaeda.

Some claim that this legislation will micromanage the war. That assertion is absolutely false and without ground. Our Commander in Chief, General Petraeus and our military commanders on the ground will retain all the flexibility they need to succeed. This legislation in no way undercuts their discretion on the ground. The only strings attached concerning troop readiness and the Iraq Government's progress have been endorsed by President Bush. Others assert that inclusion of a timeline for responsible redeployment is tantamount to capitulation. Mr. HOBSON spoke on this floor just a few minutes ago. He voted to set a timeline in Bosnia. Mr. LEWIS sits as the ranking member of this committee; he voted on June 24, 1997, to set a timeline. Mr. HASTERT, Speaker of the House, set a timeline. Mr. Delay voted for a timeline. Mr. BLUNT voted for a timeline. Mr. BOEHNER voted for a timeline.

Every one of them voted for a timeline, and what were the cir-

cumstances? We hadn't lost a single troop, not one. We had spent \$7 billion, not \$379 billion. We had brought genocide to a stop, ethnic cleansing to a stop, and we were not losing people and we had a stable environment, yet they voted for a timeline.

Here, Secretary Gates says in testimony at his confirmation hearing: "We are not winning." If that is the case, it is time for us to have a new strategy, a new direction, a new paradigm, if you will. That is what this bill does.

Mr. BOEHNER said just a few weeks ago, in terms of timelines, he said, "I think it will be rather clear in the next 60 to 90 days as to whether this plan, the current escalation, is going to work." "We need to know," Mr. BOEHNER said, "as we are moving through these benchmarks that the Iraqis are doing what they have to do." Nothing in this bill will undermine that 60- or 90-day expectation that the minority leader, the Republican leader, has articulated. Under this legislation, if the Iraqis meet their benchmarks for progress, the redeployment of American forces will not begin until a year from now. This is not any precipitous withdrawal. And, indeed, if there is total success, it will be more than a year from now.

Finally, let me point out, as I have said earlier, that timelines were supported in July of 1997, 220-2. Only two Republicans voted against setting a timeline. I voted against that timeline. And I said "at this time." Why did I say that? Because we were succeeding. We were not losing troops. We had stopped genocide. We had stopped ethnic cleansing. We had a stable government in Serbia. We were winning and our strategy was succeeding. And under those circumstances, I thought timelines were not appropriate. But there is not a military general I have talked to who has said that we are succeeding. Today, this very day, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq lies deeply wounded, life at risk. If a Member of Congress goes to Baghdad, they will not drive you from the airport to the Green Zone. Why? Because they do not believe it is safe, almost 50 months after we started this operation.

My friends, it is time for a new direction. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle support the troops, represent America, represent your people who want to win but do not want to leave our troops in the middle of a civil war. Support this well-thought-out crafted piece of legislation, which in no way undermines the ability of our troops to manage this war, but says to them, we will expect the Iraqis to perform and we will give you a time frame in which the world will know that they must themselves take responsibility.

Mr. LEWIS OF California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize my colleague from California (Mr. ROYCE) for 2 minutes.

Mr. ROYCE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as The Washington Post says today: "Altogether, the House

Democratic leadership has come up with more than \$20 billion of new spending, much of it wasted subsidies. And it makes us wonder how \$74 million to extend peanut storage payments or \$250 million for MILC subsidies will aid our troops."

Perhaps my colleagues believe that these agricultural subsidies are necessary, but I don't see how they are going to help us defeat Islamist terrorists. Is this really what General Petraeus needs? Is this what he asked for? No, it is not. And it is bad policy to start, and it is worse by mixing it without backing of our forces in the field.

It is not just the language that gives us pause here. If it is our mission to win in Iraq, then we should not be making it more difficult for our troops to succeed. Cutting off funding and micromanaging a war does that, according to our commanders in the field. And as The Post adds: "The bill excludes the judgment of General Petraeus, excludes the judgment of the U.S. commanders who would have to execute the retreat that the bill mandates."

And as The Post goes on to say: "Democrats should not seek to use pork to buy a majority for an unconditional retreat that the majority does not support."

□ 1115

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) for a unanimous consent request.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1591. It will bring our troops home, take care of our veterans, and begin to address critical needs here at home.

I applaud the leadership of the House—our Democratic leadership team—for bringing this important and far reaching bill before us today.

I, like many of my colleagues, would have preferred to have a bill before us that would get our troops out of Iraq tomorrow, or even in 3 months. I most certainly would like not to have to send the 100 members of the V.I. National Guard out to Iraq next month. But that is not doable, it is not realistic.

What is realistic is setting some benchmarks—actually the president's benchmarks as goals and legally holding him to them, while planning for the complete re-deployment by summer of next year!

More than that though, it provides what the soldiers and their families have been crying for, for the past 5 years. Equipment, training, protective gear and armor and all that adds up to troop readiness. It is negligent to send our men and women into the middle of a civil war where they become targets without the proper preparation and equipment.

H.R. 1591 sets guidelines for length of deployment, and it does something that I think will go a long way to reducing the violence against our troops, and that is it establishes that there will be no permanent bases in Iraq. It further restores our values and principles in combat by prohibiting torture.

More funding is also channeled to Afghanistan where the war needs to be brought back on track and we need to make up lost ground in the real war on terrorism.

But this bill goes further. For all these 5 long years we have also complained that funds needed here at home were not only being spent but wasted in Iraq—there is still over 9 billion that is unaccounted for and we are losing.

Well what we do in H.R. 1591 is begin to take better care of our soldiers when they return home. The stories about conditions at Walter Reed, and of persons in need of mental health care being turned away are not only heartbreaking, they border on criminal.

And we also begin to take care of some long overdue issues here at home:

Agriculture disaster assistance, State Children's Health insurance payments for rural schools, better homeland security preparedness, improving oversight and accountability and finally doing what we ought to have done 2 years ago for the victims we left behind in Katrina, Rita and Wilma.

And we help some countries with whom we have close ties and who need our help—Jordan, Afghanistan, Liberia and several other African nations.

This bill sends funding to our defense needs on the two major fronts at which our troops need us, takes care of critical needs at home, and begins to rebuild our reputation for leadership and our moral authority in the world.

I support it, the people of the Virgin Islands support it, and I urge my colleagues to support and pass H.R. 1591.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, so much has been said, and I think we are very clear on the purpose of this bill and the importance of it as far as the war in Iraq is concerned.

But there is another aspect to this bill. There are literally 2 million children who are without health care. I want to at this point recognize and give due thanks and appreciation to Congressman JOHN MURTHA. No State has suffered because of the CHIP program as the children of Georgia's 273,000 children who would be without their health insurance if it were not for this war supplemental.

When the issue was taken to the White House, he said no. All hope was gone. I went to JOHN MURTHA, and JOHN MURTHA said, we will help you, and we will attach it to the Iraqi war supplemental. And he took it to Mr. OBEY and to the Speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen, I make this plea to you, as the Scripture says clearly, suffer not the little children. This is the only hope for getting our insurance for our children in the SCHIP program. I urge you to not let the children of the United States of America go down the drain. Vote for the children of this Nation and for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. MURTHA.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS).

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, before we vote on this bill, we need

to remind ourselves one more time, the jihadist terrorism is what this debate is all about.

Brink Lindsey put it in such succinct terms when he said, "Here is the grim truth: We are only one act of madness away from a social cataclysm unlike anything our country has ever known. After a handful of such acts, who knows what kind of civilization breakdown might be in store?"

Mr. Speaker, as we anticipate future actions of jihadists and our place in Iraq, we would do well to consider their words very carefully. Al Qaeda's al-Zawahiri said this: "The jihad movement is growing and rising. It reached its peak with the two blessed raids on New York and Washington. And now it is waging a great heroic battle in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and even within the crusaders' own homes."

Osama bin Laden himself said: "The most important and serious issue today for the whole world is this third world war. It is raging in the land of the two rivers," Iraq. "The world's millstone and pillar is in Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate."

Mr. Speaker, if Democrats are correct that the struggle in Iraq is not crucial to winning the war against jihadism, then for God's sake, I wish they would explain that to the terrorists. Instead, we hear the most senior Democrat in this House quoted as saying, "I don't take sides for or against Hezbollah, or for or against Israel."

Mr. Speaker, a blind relativism that deliberatively ignores all truth and equates merciless terrorism with free nations defending themselves and their innocent citizens is more dangerous to humanity than terrorism itself, and it is proof that liberals completely misunderstand the enemy that we face.

Because of this kind of relativist neutrality, jihadists now believe they have a crucial advantage over the free world and its people. They believe their will is far stronger than ours, and that they need only to persevere to prevail.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of this bill will only encourage them in that belief. And if liberals in this body are willing to see freedom defeated in Iraq, they must also be willing to take responsibility for almost certainly what will follow.

Mr. Speaker, finally, we can have peace with jihadists tomorrow if we are willing to surrender today. And that kind of surrender will be on their terms, and it will ultimately bring a nuclear jihad to our children. Future American generations will despise this one.

Mr. Speaker, there is still time to defeat this bill. Let us not take this ominous step in this direction.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that at the end of the debate the closing speech on the Republican side will be given by our good friend from Texas Mr. JOHNSON. I think everyone in this place respects him and loves him.

I must say that having gone through this for the last 3 weeks trying to talk to each and every person who I could reach about this measure has given me a profound respect for a good many Members of this institution whom I had not known before, especially the newcomers.

The caucus that we had this morning was one of the most moving experiences that I have ever felt in my 38 years in the Congress. I heard Member after Member stand up and discuss this issue as a matter of high principle; but they also discussed it in terms of what the impact of their votes would be, not on themselves, but on the people of this country, on the soldiers who are fighting in the field, on the people in Iraq, and on our country's ability to influence the world.

This is a very tough issue. There are many considerations that each of us brings to this judgment, but in the end, I think we have a choice. As I said earlier today, we have a choice in determining what kind of Congress this is going to be. We can continue the practices of the past which rubberstamped virtually everything the President wanted on Iraqi policy. We can continue to do what he wants and only what he wants and only when he wants to do it and only in the way he wants to do it; or we can do what our Founding Fathers envisioned when they created the Congress. We can exercise checks and balances in order to try to move policy into a more constructive direction for this country.

If you oppose this bill today, and if you take the position that all it should contain is what the President sent down, then you would be saying that you wanted to finance BRAC, the base-closing program, by gutting key education programs as the President recommends. You would be opposed to additional border security, additional port security and additional cargo security.

You would be opposed to finally, after all of the horrendous pictures and all of the horrendous human suffering, you would be opposed to finally meeting our total obligations to the victims of Katrina.

You would be opposed to asking for the money which the President himself asked that we provide in 2005 on an emergency basis to prepare this country to meet the pandemic flu epidemic which will surely at some time come.

You would be opposing the additional \$3.5 million that we have provided in this bill for veterans' health care and defense health care, and you would be opposing the timelines and the benchmarks which we place in this legislation, not because they are so perfect, but because they are the instrument by which we communicate to the Iraqi politicians that they must begin to resolve their differences, they must step up, because we are not going to run our baby-sitting service forever.

It is imperative that we finally send that signal. The President cannot send

that signal, but we can help General Petraeus. We can help our own government by sending the signal that this Congress is going to play bad cop until the Iraqis get the message.

That is what Mr. MURTHA's efforts have been about, that is what mine have been about, that's what the Speaker's efforts have been about, and that's what the efforts have been about by virtually every person in this caucus and this House who has had a say in what this bill was going to contain.

I strongly urge an "aye" vote.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the chief deputy whip, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR) for 2 minutes.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, some 6,000 miles from here a new plan is underway to secure Baghdad and stabilize an Iraq that 2 months ago was sliding into chaos. Indeed, we should be encouraged by declining levels of violence in Baghdad as well as the beginning of a restoration of trust between ordinary Iraqis and coalition and Iraqi forces.

Unlike the gentleman before me, I disagree that this sends the right message. This supplemental undermines General Petraeus' plan before our troops have an opportunity to achieve success.

Instead of reaffirming our commitment to victory, this bill concedes defeat while piling on billions in unrelated pork. So while tropical fish get \$5 million, our troops get a steady Democratic diet of limitations and pull-out deadlines. We should have few doubts that, if passed, this bill will be a rallying cry for terrorists recently dismayed by our resolve.

Our troops march to the order of one Commander in Chief, not 535. While the current Commander in Chief has a plan for victory, it is apparent that the majority party in this House has already thrown in the towel.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

The gentleman is entitled to his own opinions; he is not entitled to his own facts.

There is nothing in this bill whatsoever that has anything to do with tropical fish, unless he thinks that Lake Erie is in the Tropics.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURTHA), the chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.

Mr. MURTHA. Let me tell you what is in this bill and what you are voting against. There is \$1.7 billion of this bill request for military health care. If you vote against this bill, you are denying our troops \$1.7 billion.

There is \$450 million for post-traumatic stress. There is \$450 million for brain injury care. It is insufficient, but that is the money we put in the bill; \$62 million for amputee care at Walter Reed, \$20 million to fix up Walter Reed.

That is what is in this bill for health care.

If you vote against this bill, the military families will be denied \$17 million to help prevent child-spouse abuse.

The bill increases accountability over contractors. When I was in Iraq a month and a half ago, the contractors were falling all over each other. GAO and the inspector general of Iraq said to us, help us get this under control. I asked or one of the Members in the subcommittee asked the GAO what we could do to help. And I asked the Under Secretary of Defense: How many contractors do you have in Iraq? He couldn't tell me. He said, we will tell you within a week. We still haven't heard, and that has been over a month ago. We have had 11 hearings, and we are going to have 35 more hearings before this year is over. We are going to hold the Department of Defense accountable for the money that they are spending and the strategy that they are using.

This bill bans permanent bases in Iraq. This bill bans torture in Iraq. We have sent troops to Iraq that were not trained in their specific MOSs, and that is exactly why Abu Ghraib happened. We had people that were untrained, National Guard members who were untrained who went into that prison, didn't know how to handle it, and it caused a natural disaster, a public relations disaster.

The way the military is doing the job, and there is nobody that regards the military higher than I do. Nobody is more inspired by the troops that I have talked to and I have seen. But let me tell you something. With the type of tactics that they have to use, by knocking down doors and by using overwhelming force, it makes enemies. That is the problem we have, and we are not winning the hearts and minds of the people when we do that.

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Let me talk about the readiness of our troops. Every unit in the United States, except two National Guard units, went into this war with the highest state of readiness. Now, there are only two units in the United States that are at the highest state of readiness.

This provides money to take care of that. If you vote against that, you are voting against money to take care of readiness for our strategic reserve.

Let me tell you what General Craddock says. General Craddock is the European commander, the NATO commander, American commander. Listen to what I am saying. This is what General Craddock says: "We have very little capacity left after we source the global force pool, if you will, for these ongoing European Command missions. Our ability to do that now is limited because we don't have the forces available since they are in the rotation to the other missions."

He is saying what I have been saying for a year and a half. This is a failed

policy wrapped in illusion. We do not have the troops. We do not have a strategic reserve to be able to react to a future national threat to this great country. The troops can only do so much.

This bill includes \$1.4 billion for new armored vehicles. If you vote against this, you are voting against the new armored vehicles which we need so badly. We put an extra \$313 million above what the Defense Department requested for those vehicles. That is the V-shaped vehicles which resist the IEDs. If you vote against this bill, you will be denying the troops better protection and better equipment.

The bill also includes billions to reset the forces. What I have been saying is the equipment, somebody said the other day, well, they train on old equipment. Well, why does that mean anything? Those of you who have been in the military knows what it means. It means when you go into combat, you do not have the type of equipment you need. You are risking the lives of these people by training on inadequate equipment. We have two units that will not go to the desert because they have to rush them out over to Iraq.

It is not the military's fault. The administration has forced the military to break their own guidelines in order to send troops over to supply this surge and to sustain this deployment.

Finally, we are saying in this bill, you cannot send troops back into battle unless they have the appropriate training, they are fully trained, mission capable. Is there anybody that is going to vote against that? If you vote against this bill, you vote against that. If you vote against this bill, you vote against sending troops back in less than a year at home. That is unacceptable.

You can sit here and say we are fighting this war, oh, yes, you can sit here in Washington and say you are fighting this war. But let me tell you something, those young people sometimes went back three and four times; their families are suffering. These are not 140,000 people. These are each individuals with families and relatives that are bearing the brunt of this fighting that are sent back.

This bill forces the administration to live up to the guidelines they have set for their military and not to extend them. A psychologist told us in a hearing that if you spend 3 months in combat that there is a good chance you will start to develop PTSD three months in this intensive combat in Baghdad.

Now, you can sit here and talk about us fighting this war on terrorism. We put an extra billion dollars for Afghanistan in this bill so we could fight terrorism where it started in Afghanistan. That is where it started.

Let me tell you something. We set benchmarks. We set benchmarks because it has not worked. Every time something happens over there, what he says is, well, we will send American troops; we will send American troops

back before they have their time at home. We will extend American troops. The Iraqis have to start to bear this responsibility for themselves, and that is why we are putting it in the bill.

The American people in the last election sent a message. They said we want the Iraqis to solve their own problems in Iraq. The Americans have borne the brunt. We are spending \$8.4 billion a month, \$2 billion to get people and equipment and supplies over to Iraq, \$2 billion a month, 8,000 miles away.

I will tell you what hurts the troops; I will tell you what hurts them. It hurts them when they extend it beyond 13 months or the marines, beyond 7 months. What hurts the troops, if you send the troops back before they have a year at home. That is what hurts the morale of the troops. I am the person that found the 44,000 shortage of body armor in the initial invasion of Iraq. We had troops in danger because they did not have the equipment they needed. We cannot send troops back into combat without equipment and fully being trained.

Let me just say this in the end. My grandfather's Civil War hat is in my office. He lost his arm in the Civil War fighting for the North, some of you Southerners here. My great-grandmother lived to be 96. I was 6-years-old when she died. She said you are on this Earth to make a difference. We are going to make a difference with this bill. We are going to bring those troops home. We are going to start changing the direction of this great country.

Mr. Speaker and distinguished Members of this body, the United States currently has 145,000 troops on the ground in Iraq and over half a trillion dollars has been expended in the war. More than 3,200 of our sons and daughters have lost their lives and close to 25,000 have been wounded; hundreds with amputated limbs and thousands with traumatic brain injuries.

The Pentagon reports that the Iraqi Security Forces have grown in number, reaching their goal of 325,000 trained and equipped. The Iraqis have a Constitution and have held national elections. These milestones have been met, yet lack of security and stability continues. The war in Iraq has been plagued by mischaracterization based on unrealistic optimism instead of realism. Reality dictates that conditions on the ground are simply moving in the wrong direction.

There are limits to military power. There is no U.S. military solution to Iraq's civil war. It is up to the Iraqis.

Beginning in May 2005, after two years of mischaracterizations and misrepresentations by this Administration, the Defense Appropriations subcommittee required the Department of Defense to submit quarterly reports to Congress on the facts necessary to measure stability and security in Iraq. Since July 2005, we have received these reports. They are dismal and demonstrate a clear lack of progress in vital areas of concern. Electricity, oil production, employment and potable water remain at woeful levels.

The average weekly attacks have grown from 430 in July 2005 to well over 1000 today. In fact, attacks throughout the country have in-

creased 10 percent over the last 4 months. Iraqi casualties have increased from 63 per day in October 2005 to over 125 per day.

Recent polls show that more than six in 10 Iraqis now say their lives are going badly, double the percentage who said so in late 2005. Sixty-nine percent of the Iraqis surveyed said the presence of U.S. forces in the country makes the overall security situation worse. In January 2006, 47 percent of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.-led forces. When the same polling question was asked just 8 months later, 61 percent of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.-led forces.

The support of the American public continues to erode and there is little confidence in the current strategy. Today less than 30 percent of Americans approve of the way the President is handling the war, and only 11 percent support the President's plan to increase troop levels in Iraq. A February 2006 poll showed that 72 percent of American troops serving in Iraq believed the U.S. should exit Iraq within the year and 42 percent said their mission was unclear.

Wars cannot be won with slogans. There must be a clear and reachable plan and a defined way to measure the success of that plan. The President says he has a new plan for a way forward in Iraq. General Peter Schoomaker, Chief of the United States Army, said in a recent hearing that in order for a plan to be effective we "have to be able to measure the purpose." But the President sets forth a plan with no defined matrices for measuring progress and no consequences if progress is not made. This new plan is simply more of the same open ended commitment in Iraq that has not worked.

A new strategy that is based on redeployment rather than further U.S. military engagement, and one that is centered on handing Iraq back to the Iraqis, is what is needed. I do not believe that Iraq will make the political progress necessary for its security and stability until U.S. forces redeploy.

In order to achieve stability in Iraq and the Region, I recommend:

(1) The redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq

(2) The execution of a robust diplomatic effort and the restoration of our international credibility

(3) The repairing of our military readiness and the rebuilding of our strategic reserve to face future threats.

REDEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES FROM IRAQ

To achieve stability and security in Iraq, I believe we first must have a responsible phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. General William Odom (U.S. Army, Retired) recently testified, "We are pursuing the wrong war."

Stability and security in the Region should be our overarching strategy, not a "victory in Iraq." I agree with General Odom and believe that Regional Stability can only be accomplished through the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq.

Who wants us to stay in Iraq? In my opinion, Iran and Al Qaeda, because we intensify the very radical extremism we claim to be fighting against, while at the same time depleting our financial and human resources.

As long as the U.S. military continues to occupy Iraq, there will be no real security. Maintaining U.S. troop strength in Iraq or adding to the strength in specified areas, has not proven

effective in the past nor do I believe it will work in the future. The Iraq war cannot be won by the U.S. military, predominantly because of the way our military operates. They use overwhelming force, which I advocate to save American lives, but it is counter to winning the hearts and minds of the people.

HOW TO RE-DEPLOY

I recommend the phased redeployment of U.S. forces, first from Saddam's palaces, then from the green zone. Next, from the prime real estate of Iraq's major cities, out of the factories and universities, and finally out of the country all together. We need to give communities back to the Iraqis so they can begin to self govern, begin economic recovery and return to some type of normality. I recommend the adoption of a U.S. policy that encourages and rewards reconstruction and regional investment and one that is dictated and administered not by the United States, but by the Iraqis themselves.

RESTORATION OF INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY

I believe that a responsible redeployment from Iraq is the first step necessary in restoring our tarnished international credibility. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, our international credibility, even among allies, has plummeted. Stability in Iraq is important not only to the United States, but it is important to the Region and to the entire world. The BBC recently released a poll showing that nearly three-quarters of those polled in 25 countries disapprove of U.S. policies toward Iraq. More than two-thirds said the U.S. military presence in the Middle East does more harm than good. Just 29 percent of respondents said the United States has a general positive influence in the world, down from 40 percent two years ago.

HOW DO WE RESTORE OUR INTERNATIONAL CREDIBILITY

In order to restore international credibility, I believe it is necessary for the U.S. to completely denounce any aspirations of building permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq; I believe we should shut down the Guantanamo detention facility; and we must bulldoze the Abu Ghraib prison. We must clearly articulate and demonstrate a policy of "no torture, no exceptions" and directly engage countries in the region with dialogue instead of directives. This includes allies as well as our perceived adversaries.

REPAIRING OF OUR MILITARY READINESS AND REBUILDING OUR STRATEGIC RESERVE TO FACE FUTURE THREATS

Our annual Defense spending budget is currently in excess of \$450 billion. Above this amount, we are spending \$8.4 billion dollars a month in the war in Iraq and yet our strategic reserve is in desperate shape. While we are fighting an asymmetric threat in the short term, we have weakened our ability to respond to what I believe is a grave long term conventional and nuclear threat.

At the beginning of the Iraq war, 80 percent of ALL Army units and almost 100 percent of active combat units were rated at the highest state of readiness. Today, virtually all of our active-duty combat units at home and ALL of our guard units are at the lowest state of readiness, primarily due to equipment shortages resulting from repeated and extended deployments to Iraq. In recent testimony given by a high ranking Pentagon official it was reported that our country is threatened because we lack readiness at home.

Our Army has no strategic reserve, and while it is true that the U.S. Navy and the U.S.

Air Force can be used to project power, there is a limit to what they can achieve. Overall, our military remains capable of projecting power, but we must also be able to sustain that projection, and in this regard there is no replacement for boots on the ground.

HOW DO WE REPAIR READINESS AND REBUILD OUR STRATEGIC RESERVE

We must make it a national priority to re-strengthen our military and to repair readiness. I advocate an increase in overall troop strength. The current authorized level is below what I believe is needed to maintain an optimal military. In recent testimony to the Defense Subcommittee that I chair, the Army and Marine Corps Commanders testified that they could not continue to sustain the current deployment practices without an adverse effect on the health and well-being of service members and their families.

For decades, the Army operated on a deployment policy that for every one year of deployment, two years were spent at home. This was considered optimal for re-training, re-equipping and re-constituting. Without relief, the Army will be forced to extend deployments to Iraq to over one year in country and will be forced to send troops back with less than one year at home. The Army reported that a 9-month deployment was preferable. Medical experts testified that in intensive combat, deployments of over 3 months increased the likelihood for service members to develop post traumatic stress disorders. A recent report by the Harvard University School of Government put the total cost of providing medical care and disability benefits to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan at \$350 to \$700 billion.

We must invest in the health and well being of our service members by providing for the right amount of troops and for appropriate deployment and rotation cycles. Our military equipment inventories are unacceptably low. The Services report that at least \$100 billion more is needed to get them back to ready state. In doing so, we must not neglect investment in military technologies of the future. While we remain bogged down in Iraq, the size and sophistication of other militaries are growing. We must not lose our capability to deter future threats.

Let me conclude by saying historically, whether it was India, Algeria or Afghanistan, foreign occupations do not work, and in fact incite civil unrest. Our military remains the greatest military in the world, but there are limits to its ability to control a population that considers them occupiers.

I have said this before and I continue to say that there are essentially only two plans. One is to continue an occupation that has not worked and that has shown no progress toward stabilization. The other, which I advocate, is to end the occupation of Iraq, redeploy and re-strengthen our military and turn Iraq over to the Iraqis.

THE WATERS-BOEHNER COALITION

(By Scott Lilly, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress)

The U.S. House of Representatives is an unusual place and politics makes strange bedfellows. But the coalition to block funding for U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and improve the deplorable state of medical care for our returning veterans is one for the record books.

Led by House Minority Leader John Boehner on the right and Los Angeles Congresswoman Maxine Waters on the left, the

coalition is striving to put together enough votes to block passage of the \$124 billion spending package expected to go to the House Floor on Friday. Boehner, hoping to get nearly all House Republicans to vote against the measure, contends:

... there is only one way to do the right thing: fully-fund the troops without strings attached ... Setting timelines is no different than handing the enemy our war plan itself. It serves as a road map for the terrorists to plot maneuvers against American men and women in uniform. Micromanaging the war from Capitol is, by any standard or definition, a recipe for disaster.

Boehner also opposes "incomprehensible spending" on "unrelated, non-emergency" items not requested by the White House. This includes among other things, \$2.8 billion to address the health care problems confronting returning veterans—funds to address the problems at Walter Reed; improve treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury; speed the processing of veteran requests for entry into the VA medical system and clean up the \$550 million maintenance backlog at VA health facilities. Boehner also objects to more than \$3 billion in unrequested funds to cope with other military needs, primarily correcting the shortfall in the readiness of military units being sent into combat.

Waters reaches the same conclusion as Boehner based on an entirely different assessment of the facts:

Not only did the American public speak loudly and clearly last Nov. 7, but poll after poll reinforces the message that Americans want their troops home now. The president's supplemental request is just what the word "supplemental" implies—additional funds to expand and continue this war. I believe that there is enough money available in the pipeline to fund a planned exit. I will vote against the supplemental unless the additional funds are used to fully fund the safe, secure and timely withdrawal of our troops by Dec. 31.

Boehner wants no strings attached and Waters not only wants strings, but shorter and stronger strings. Boehner does not like the pressure that the bill places on the President to bring an end to the U.S. military presence in Iraq and Waters does not want to end U.S. presence through pressure but rather mandate it by law. As a result both want to defeat money needed for fuel, ammunition, spare parts and medical care for those presently in harms way.

Both also in my judgment misread the mood of the American people and are wrong on the best course for the country. The American people overwhelmingly oppose the war but they even more overwhelmingly oppose anything that would put the brave men and women we have called into service at greater risk. No war in American history has ended as the result of a legislative fiat. Even Vietnam, which is the closest parallel, was ended because of political pressure rather than legislative direction. The right way to end our presence in Iraq is for the Executive and Legislative branches of our government to reach an accommodation on Iraq policy.

The Bush Administration needs Congress to support its military and foreign policy objectives and the language in the Supplemental now pending sends a clear message that such support will be contingent upon a plan for an ordered withdrawal—a withdrawal that protects our troops and American interests in the region.

But what Waters and her supporters seem to fail to recognize is that the Congress needs the White House. That may be hard for some to accept but extracting U.S. forces from the violence now besieging much of

Iraq will be a complex and hazardous process. It will take the best planners that the Defense Department can find; it will take strong leadership on the part of commanders and hard choices in terms of both military and political priorities. Equally important it will take extensive diplomatic consultation on both a regional and global basis. None of those things can be accomplished by the Congress. It is not the way our government was designed and it is not the way it works. If the two branches cannot reach accommodation there will be hell to pay and those who have already been asked to pay the most will be forced to pay again.

The language contained in the supplemental demands that the Iraqi government meet certain bench marks and provided those benchmarks are achieved, begins redeployment of American forces in March of next year. It also requires that if the White House believes that it must violate long standing Pentagon policies on the readiness of military units sent into combat, the length of deployments into combat zones and the length of time between deployments the President must fully explain why he is ordering a violation of those policies.

This is very strong pressure on a President that is very strong willed. It is the beginning of a process which will either bring the two powerful branches of our government together in mutual accommodation or push the country closer to a Constitutional crisis. It is the first step in a process that will either fortunately or unfortunately continue all year.

Following the Friday House vote on the Supplemental, that legislation will come before the Senate and the final version will be crafted in a conference committee in April and presented to both houses for final approval by the end of that month. Within weeks the House will begin deliberation on the Fiscal 2008 Defense Appropriation which will remain under various stages of consideration until September. There will be numerous opportunities for Congress to strengthen its demands with respect to Iraq and for the Administration to respond. What opponents of the War cannot do at this juncture is overplay their hand and slow the growth of public sentiment and political pressure against the current Iraq policy and its supporters.

Boehner is also playing a high risk game. He is putting the Congressional wing of his party on record as opposing measures to require that the troops are well trained and well equipped before they are sent into deadly conflict. He is opposing funds his own President says the troops need now and he is opposing medical care for the troops once they return. Simultaneously, he is saying that the Congress should not apply pressure to the White House for a new strategy to pull us out of Iraq. That is a position that is not only opposed by nearly all Democrats but by an overwhelming majority of independents and a substantial share of Republicans. It is not a particularly smart way to redefine the Republican Party in the wake of the drubbing his part took in last fall's elections.

The supplemental is not perfect. There is probably no one who supports every provision. But there is much that is good in the bill and begins the process by which the Congress and the White House can come together on a solution that is best for the country. It is not as simple or straight forward as many would like but it is the process that our founding fathers bestowed on us and it is the only approach that can bring an ordered end to this catastrophic engagement.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, you all know that I have worked over the years very, very

closely with Mr. MURTHA and our chairman Mr. OBEY. I think most would agree that some of us make a significant effort to reach out on both sides of the aisle to solve problems where that is possible.

In this case, we have a major, major disagreement. I do not presume others to be insincere in their disagreement, but I feel very strongly that we must make absolutely certain that we do nothing to undermine the mission of our troops by way of this debate.

There is absolutely no doubt that the message that we will be sending as this bill passes today, in part, will say to the terrorists of the world, including Iraq, that America is not willing to stay and complete the mission.

I rarely refer to newspaper items in addressing the House, but I cannot help but note that the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Atlanta Journal, et cetera, those newspapers all have expressed grave concerns about combining this supplemental funding for a war with huge amounts of pork.

As a result of that, I am going to use an item several times mentioned today as a part of my own close. The item is entitled: "Retreat and Butter. Are Democrats in the House Voting for Farm Subsidies or Withdrawal from Iraq?"

"Today, the House of Representatives is due to vote on a bill that would grant \$25 million to spinach farmers in California. The legislation would also appropriate \$75 million for peanut storage in Georgia and \$15 million to protect Louisiana rice fields from saltwater. More substantially, there is \$120 million for shrimp and menhaden fishermen, \$250 million for milk subsidies, \$500 million for wildfire suppression and \$1.3 billion to build levees in New Orleans.

"Altogether the House Democratic leadership has come up with more than \$20 billion in new spending, much of it wasteful subsidies to agriculture or pork barrel projects aimed at individual Members of Congress. At the tail of all this log rolling," and by the way I would not use this next phrase so that Mr. OBEY knows that, "log rolling and political bribery lies this stinger: Representatives who support the bill, for whatever reason, will be voting to require that all U.S. combat troops leave Iraq by August 2008, regardless of what happens during the next 17 months or whether U.S. commanders believe a pullout at that moment protects or endangers U.S. national security, not to mention the thousands of American trainers and Special Forces troops who would remain behind.

"The Democrats claim to have a mandate from voters to reverse the Bush administration's policy in Iraq. Yet the leadership is ready to piece together the votes necessary to force a fateful turn in the war by using tactics usually dedicated to highway bills or the Army Corps of Engineers budget. The legislation pays more heed to a handful of peanut farmers than to the

24 million Iraqis who are living through a maelstrom initiated by the United States, the outcome of which could shape the future of the Middle East for decades.

"Congress can and should play a major role in determining how and when the war ends. Political benchmarks for the Iraqi Government are important, provided they are not unrealistic or inflexible. Even dates for troop withdrawals might be helpful, if they are cast as goals rather than requirements, and if the timing derives from the needs of Iraq, not the U.S. election cycle. The Senate's version of the supplemental spending bill for Iraq and Afghanistan contains nonbinding benchmarks and a withdrawal date that is a goal; that approach is more likely to win broad support and avoid a White House veto.

"As it is, House Democrats are pressuring a bill that has the endorsement of MoveOn.org but excludes the judgment of the U.S. commanders who would have to execute the retreat the bill mandates. It would heap money on unneedy dairy farmers while provoking a constitutional fight with the White House that could block the funding to equip troops in the field. Democrats who want to force a withdrawal should vote against war appropriations. They should not seek to use pork to buy a majority for an unconditional retreat that the majority does not support."

At this point, I include for the RECORD the Statement of Administration Policy.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY, H.R. 1591—U.S. TROOP READINESS, VETERANS' HEALTH, AND IRAQ ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

(Sponsor: Obey (D), Wisconsin)

The Administration strongly opposes the "U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act." The Administration seeks prompt enactment of the President's request to support our armed forces and diplomatic corps as they implement the new strategy to achieve America's strategic objective of a democratic Iraq that can govern, defend, and sustain itself and be an ally in the war on terror.

This legislation would substitute the mandates of Congress for the considered judgment of our military commanders. This bill assumes and forces the failure of the new strategy even before American commanders in the field are able to fully implement their plans. Regardless of the success our troops are achieving in the field, this bill would require their withdrawal. In addition, the bill could withhold resources needed to enable Iraqi Security Forces to take over missions currently conducted by American troops. Many policy makers agree that the Iraqi Security Forces must assume responsibility in defending Iraqi democracy, and it is unconscionable that funds for the Iraqi Security Forces be subject to conditions that may threaten our full support. These Congressional mandates would place freedom and democracy in Iraq at grave risk, embolden our enemies, and undercut the Administration's plan to develop the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi economy. This bill would impose inappropriate, operationally unsound, and arbitrary constraints on how the Department of Defense should prepare units to deploy. Prohibiting the deployment of units to combat unless a Chief of Service certifies the

units as fully mission-capable 15 days prior to deployment is unnecessary, since the Department of Defense will not send into battle troops that are not fully capable of performing their assigned missions. It is unwise to codify in law specific deployment and dwell times, since this would artificially limit the flexibility of our commanders to conduct operations in the field and infringe on the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief to manage the readiness and availability of the Armed Forces. If this legislation were presented to the President, he would veto the bill.

The war supplemental should remain focused on the needs of the troops and should not be used as a vehicle for added non-emergency spending and policy proposals, especially domestic proposals, that should be fully vetted and considered on their own merits, such as minimum wage, various tax proposals, and changes in contracting policy. This bill adds billions in unrequested spending that is largely unjustified and non-emergency. Because of the excessive and extraneous non-emergency spending it contains, if this legislation were presented to the President, he would veto the bill.

Congress should reject this legislation, and promptly send the President a responsible bill that provides the funding and flexibility our troops need, without holding funding for the troops hostage to unrelated spending.

The Administration would like to take this opportunity to share additional views regarding the Committee's version of the bill.

Title I—Global war on terror

Base Realignment and Closure. The Administration submitted a budget amendment on March 9, 2007, that would fully offset the \$3.1 billion shortfall needed to implement the recommendations of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission. Including this funding as an emergency request without offsets is inappropriate and unnecessary. The Administration urges passage of its request instead.

Additionally, the Administration opposes any amendment to the bill that would alter the approved recommendations of the 2005 BRAC Commission. The BRAC process, as authorized by Congress, requires that both the President and Congress approve or disapprove the Commission's recommendations in their entirety to allow the process to remain apolitical. Legislating a specific change to a BRAC Commission recommendation would adversely affect the integrity of the BRAC 2005 process.

Operation and Maintenance (O&M). The Administration objects to cuts of almost \$1.9 billion for priority O&M activities while increasing areas less critical to the war effort. Such reductions (including reductions for contracting) could damage the military's ability to execute wartime operations and the readiness of U.S. forces as they prepare to deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq. The Administration urges Congress to support the President's amended request.

In addition, the bill does not fund the President's \$350 million request for training, equipping, transporting, and sustaining our partners in the Global War on Terror. Our allies are critical to our success in combating extremists across the globe and providing this support reduces the burden on U.S. forces. We strongly urge the House to restore these funds.

General Transfer Authority (GTA). The Administration appreciates the Committee's approval of the requested \$3.5 billion in GTA for this bill, but urges that GTA for the FY 2007 DOD Appropriations Act be increased from \$4.5 billion to \$8.0 billion, as included in the March 9 revised request. This increase is essential for the Department of Defense to

□ 1145

reallocate funds to sustain critical operations and to address the needs of our field commanders.

International Affairs Programs. The Administration commends the Committee for providing the President's request for important international affairs funding for avian influenza, assistance to Afghanistan and Lebanon, peacekeeping in Somalia, Chad, and East Timor, and unanticipated needs to help relieve human suffering, including in Sudan and other parts of Africa.

While the Administration appreciates the House's support of the request for Iraq-related funding, it objects to the reductions to Iraq assistance programs and Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) expansion. The bill reduces funding for democracy programs, building national capacity, strengthening local governing capacity and delivery of essential services, creating jobs to help stabilize the country, and supporting Iraqi rule of law programs—the very things that must be done for Iraq to become self-reliant and assume responsibilities from the United States. The reduction in funding for PRT expansion will also impede our ability to get civilians into PRTs to support Iraqis at the local level. The Administration also opposes the reductions to the request for Kosovo which could inhibit our effort to support economic growth, security, and political stability during and after the resolution of its status. Given the reductions to Iraq and Kosovo, the Administration is especially concerned that the House bill provides over \$600 million in unrequested international programs. The House is urged to redirect funds from unrequested programs to fully fund the Iraq and Kosovo requests.

The Administration also does not support section 1905 of the bill, which establishes a Presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed position to oversee Iraq assistance programs. This position is not necessary since the Secretary of State has already appointed a coordinator for reconstruction.

The Administration also opposes the \$2.5 billion in unrequested emergency funding provided to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This funding does not meet the standard for emergency funding and should be considered within the regular annual appropriations process.

Title II—Hurricane recovery

Department of Homeland Security. The bill provides the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, and Texas with a 100-percent Federal match for FEMA public and individual assistance related to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Wilma, and Dennis and would eliminate the prohibition on forgiving Community Disaster Loans. The bill also extends utility assistance for an additional 12 months. The Administration opposes a waiver of the State match requirement. The Administration also notes that the Administration is funding, at the President's direction, 90 percent of Gulf Coast rebuilding costs for public infrastructure and that the Federal Government has provided—following negotiations with the State governments of Louisiana and Mississippi—sufficient Community Development Block Grant funding to meet the Federal match requirements for Louisiana and Mississippi, in essence federally funding 100 percent of such costs.

Corps of Engineers. The Administration opposes the \$1.3 billion in unrequested funding the bill provides to address increased costs for certain ongoing levee restoration projects that were provided supplemental funding in P.L. 109-234. These funds are unnecessary because the Administration proposed FY 2007 supplemental language to allow the Corps to reallocate \$1.3 billion of previously appropriated emergency funding

to address these needs. The Administration plans to consider the need for additional funding once the Corps completes its revised cost estimates for all planned work this summer.

Constitutional concerns

The Administration urges the House of Representatives to strike provisions of the bill that infringe upon the President's constitutional authorities, interfere with the President's ability to conduct diplomatic, military, and intelligence activities or supervise the unitary executive branch effectively, or violate the constitutional principle of separation of powers, such as sections 1311, 1314(c)(1), 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 4403(c), and 5004(b) and language in title I relating to committee approval under the headings in chapter 7 for "Military Construction, Army" and "Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps" and in chapter 8 under the heading "Diplomatic and Consular Programs." The Administration notes that, while the legislation includes authority to waive restrictions relating to readiness and deployment periods (sections 1901, 1902, and 1903), it does not include authority to waive the all-or-nothing restrictions relating to benchmarks for performance of the Iraqi government. Moreover, several provisions of the bill purport to require approval of the Committees prior to the obligation of funds. These provisions should be changed to require only notification of Congress, since any other interpretation would contradict the Supreme Court's ruling in *INS v. Chadha*.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining on both sides?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) has 11½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) has 17 minutes remaining.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the Republican leader.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I think the moment is here, a moment that we have been debating over the last 2½ months and an issue that I think the American people care deeply about.

It is an historic moment, and I thought to myself this morning how will history judge what it is that we are doing on the floor of the House today. What will they write 50 years from now about the decisions that we are making here today?

When I handed Ms. PELOSI, our new Speaker, the gavel back in January, I said that the battle of ideas should be fought on the floor of the House, but as we do it, we should respect each other's opinion. We can disagree without being disagreeable.

I have great respect for Mr. MURTHA and Mr. OBEY, those that have brought this bill to the floor today, along with Mr. YOUNG and Mr. LEWIS, and we should respect all of our opinions and each other's opinions when we get into this difficult decision.

All of us wish that Iraq had gone better. We all wish that the mistakes had not been made and that the terrorists would not have shown up and made this a central front in our war with them.

The fact is, we are in Iraq. We are in the midst of a fight with an enemy that is just not in Iraq, that is all over the world, and we are there. You begin to think about the bill that we have before us to pay for the war in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq. Somehow we have room for \$10 billion worth of non-military spending.

I don't need to go through all the details for the money for spinach, the money for the Capitol Hill power plant. That is a real emergency, things that don't belong in this bill.

But I think all of us know what the greater issue is here, and the bigger issue. That is that the ideas of our friend from Pennsylvania, to put his benchmarks in there, which are very different than the benchmarks that I proposed. The benchmarks I proposed were to measure progress, for trying to help ensure that we win. The benchmarks I see in this bill are intended to bring about failure, to bring about stumbles.

If you look at all of the handcuffs, all of the hoops and hurdles that are in here, I believe there is only one outcome, only one outcome if we support all this brings and the handcuffs, and that outcome is failure. I don't believe that failure in Iraq is an option. There is a lot riding on this.

Just think for a moment what signal, what signal this sends to our enemies. What does it say to them, we are not willing to stand behind our troops, that there is a hard deadline out there, that we are going to withdraw our troops; what signal does it send to them?

Our enemies understand what happened in Vietnam. When this Congress voted to cut off funding, we left Vietnam. We left chaos and genocide in the streets of Vietnam because we pulled the troops out and didn't have the will to win.

Our enemies know what happened in 1983 after the Marine barracks were bombed in Lebanon, and we pulled out. What did we see? Chaos and genocide all through Lebanon, and continuing to this day. Then in 1993, we decided to pull out of Somalia; left chaos and genocide in our wake that continues to this day.

Who doesn't believe, who doesn't believe that if we go down this path, we are going to leave chaos and genocide in Iraq, and we are going to tell our enemies all around the world that you can take on the United States, you can push them to the edge? At the end of the day, they will just go home.

The spread of radical Islamic terrorism is a threat to our Nation and is a threat to the free world, not just in the Middle East. They are in Asia, they are in Europe, they are in Africa. Cells are growing right here in America, people dedicated to killing Americans, killing our allies, and ending freedom and wanting to impose some radical Islamic law on the entire world.

I ask you, what are we to do, just walk away from the fight? What message does this action that we take

today, what does it send, what kind of message does it send to our allies, to people who have worked with us over the course of the last 50 years, 100 years, to bring freedom around the world, to end tyranny around the world? What message do we send to them, that we are there as long as it doesn't get too tough?

Think about what Franklin Roosevelt must have felt like in the midst of World War II when things weren't going so well either in Europe or over in the South Pacific. I am sure there was a big debate here in Congress, the same way, same time. But Franklin Roosevelt knew that the world had no choice but to stop Imperial Japan and to stop Hitler's Germany, because he knew that the consequences of failure in World War II were going to lead to more tyranny and less freedom all around the world. He didn't shrink from that challenge.

But more importantly, think about what this message sends to our troops. Our troops are on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan doing their duty to protect freedom and to end tyranny. They are there watching this debate that we are having in the House today and wondering, will Congress do its duty? Will Congress stand up and support the mission that I am in?

Think about the soldiers right this moment who are on a mission somewhere in Baghdad trying to bring safety and security to those people while this debate goes on and this vote is about to occur as to whether we are going to support what they are doing. This is an important moment.

Our forefathers, our forefathers had this moment many times before. Whether it was George Washington or Abraham Lincoln in the middle of the Civil War, when it wasn't going very well, they had a decision to make. Was failure an option for any of them? No, it wasn't.

I know this is difficult, and I know there are deeply held opinions on both sides of the aisle and amongst both sides of the aisle, but I would ask all of my colleagues, is failure an option? Do we want to give victory a chance?

We sent General Petraeus over there, 84-0, was confirmed by the Senate. The plan is under way. What this bill will do will be to undercut his opportunity at success.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am here to say to you that we have no choice but to win, because if we fail in Iraq, you will see the rise even further and faster of radical Islamic terrorism all around the world. We will see chaos in Baghdad. We will see genocide there. We will provide safe haven for our enemies. We will destabilize the moderate Arab countries in the Middle East. If anybody doesn't believe that this won't end Israel as I know it, you are kidding yourself. If you don't believe that these terrorists won't come here and fight us on the streets of America instead of the streets of Baghdad, I think you are kidding yourself.

So we have our moment of truth. We have our opportunity to do what our forefathers have done, and that is to stand up, support our troops and to win, because the outcome of failure is actually too ominous to even think about.

So I ask my colleagues today, let's not vote for spinach, let's not vote for more money for the power plant and all the other silly things in here. We all know what this bill is about, and it is about whether we have got the courage to give victory a chance, or whether we are just going to bring our troops home and give up.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, I regret that the minority leader has chosen to trivialize one item in this bill, which represents our direct responsibility to people who work in the most outrageous conditions on Capitol Hill. Roll Call itself, in describing the funding that we have in this bill on the Capitol heating plant, which the majority leader just trivialized, wrote that "what we have on our hands is a 'horrific scandal'. The working environment for the 10-member Capitol tunnel shop team resembles that of hell."

One of our own Republican colleagues in this House is mentioned in the editorial as describing the conditions in that heating plant as, quote, "inhumane and unprofessional," and said of the tunnel workers, that they are "probably going to end up dying because of their exposure to asbestos."

The money in this bill is for cleaning up the asbestos problem, which people in that tunnel have to work in every day. I make no apology whatsoever for providing that funds. The minority leader ought to be standing side by side with us to meet our obligations to clean up that mess. I am surprised he doesn't recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY).

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Thank you to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. Speaker, there are 435 Members of Congress, and I know there are many people on the other side of the aisle who don't know who I am. I am PATRICK MURPHY, and I am from Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Back home, my wife and my daughter Maggie are watching, probably on C-SPAN right now.

Over 13 years ago, I wore the United States Army uniform for the first time. I was able to live the American dream. I was able to rise through the ranks and become a captain and a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division. We had a saying in the Army: Lead, follow or get out of the way.

Well, in the past 4 years, the Republican-led Congress followed. They had their chance, and they followed lock-step as this President led our country into an open-ended commitment refreeing a religious civil war.

For the last 4 years, this Republican Congress followed lockstep as my fellow soldiers continued to die in Iraq without a clear mission, without benchmarks to determine success, without a clear timeline for coming home. In the last 4 years, the Republican Congress followed this President as thousands of brave American soldiers returned home in coffins with our American flag. Nineteen of those coffins had soldiers that I served with in Iraq, 19 paratroopers.

Mr. Speaker, with this bill, with this vote, we mark the end of that error.

Many of the 49 new freshmen, both Democrats and Republicans, were elected a few months ago on the promise of new leadership, and that is what this bill does. It leads our way out of Iraq. It leads the way to rebuild our overextended Army, and leads the way to win the war on terror.

To those on the other side of the aisle who are opposed, I want to ask you the same questions that my gunner asked me when I was leading a convoy up and down Ambush Alley one day. He said, "Sir, what are we doing over here? What's our mission? When are these Iraqis going to come off the sidelines and stand up for their own country?"

So to my colleagues across the aisle, your taunts about supporting our troops ring hollow if you are still unable to answer those questions now 4 years later.

Mr. Speaker, to vote "no" on this bill is to stand idly by, to let our commitment to Iraq remain open-ended and to let countless more American soldiers be killed in the sands of al-Anbar and the streets of Baghdad.

Short-term political peril may sidestep those who cast their vote for the status quo, but our children's history books will not treat them kindly, nor should they.

Mr. Speaker, the 110th Congress will be judged whether we have the political courage to put forth a plan to restore accountability and oversight, to bring our troops home from Iraq and, most importantly, to win the war on terror.

This is our opportunity. This is our chance to lead. For too long, the American people have been craving leadership, craving accountability and craving a new direction in Iraq. Let's give that to them today.

□ 1200

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to yield the balance of my time to my hero of the United States Congress, SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Thank you, Members. NANCY, JOHN, DAVID, I appreciate you all.

I rise today in support of a clean emergency spending bill for our troops, but this one is all smoke and mirrors. We must give our men and women in uniform everything they need to thwart the insurgency in Iraq and come home safely and soon.

You know, we can't tie the hands of the guys on the ground with time lines or benchmarks. And, worse, we shouldn't be using the emergency troop spending bill as the way to finance the political gimmickry of special interest projects. It is just exasperating that the Democrat leaders have turned the emergency troop spending bill into a pork barrel project giveaway.

This bill gives piles of money to shrimpers, spinach farmers, and peanut storage. You know, what does throwing money at Bubba Gump, Popeye the Sailorman, and Mr. Peanut have to do with winning a war? Nothing.

The special interest projects added to increase the likelihood of this bill passing are really an insult to the troops who want, need, and deserve our full support. The Democrats are trying to buy the majority vote today one pork project at a time, perhaps because the majority does not support their slow bleed surrender strategy.

Since the President announced his new plan for Iraq in January, there has been measured, steady progress. He changed the rules of engagement and removed political protections. Coalition forces nabbed more than 50 suspects and dismantled a bomb factory in Iraq over the past few days. Coalition forces in Iraq detained seven suspects with reported ties to foreign fighter groups. In Ramadi, troops nabbed four other suspects with alleged ties to al Qaeda. In Mosul, coalition forces captured a former paramilitary leader who allegedly is responsible for setting up al Qaeda terrorist training camps in Iraq and Syria. During another operation, troops captured a suspected terrorist with alleged ties to al Qaeda car bomb and assassination cells.

We must seize this opportunity to move forward and not stifle future success and harm troop morale.

More importantly, I want to know, how many of you have ever asked your constituents, Do you want to lose in Iraq? I think if you ask that question, do you want to lose in Iraq, Americans will wholeheartedly say no.

We have smart, strong men and women serving in Iraq, and they need our help, and they need the full support of their country and their Congress.

Our troops don't need 435 generals in Washington declaring, we will send you money for bullets, but we won't send you bulletproof vests. Our troops don't need folks in suits sitting in wood paneled rooms on Capitol Hill saying, we will send you armored tanks, but we won't send you gas.

Literally, this bill forces our guys on the ground to fight a war with one arm tied behind their backs. That just smacks of defeat.

Most of you in the Chamber know that I spent nearly 7 years as a prisoner in Vietnam, more than half of that time in solitary. Well, that was during my second tour in Vietnam. During my first tour, I worked for General Westmoreland at MAC-V Headquarters, that is the Military Assistance Command Vietnam.

While working late at night, we had a bunch of men involved in the first real hand-to-hand combat using bayonets. You may remember that, JOHN. That was war. It turns out someone sent back footage to Washington that would match the opening scene of "Saving Private Ryan." In the middle of the night, the red phone rang and I answered it. I heard an earful that is not fit for this House Chamber, something like, This is the White House. What the heck is going on over there? I replied, I'll wake up General Westmoreland. They slammed the phone down and hung up. That was the control they had over our guys.

Starting in 1965, we had folks in Washington trying to tell the generals how to run things on the ground in Vietnam. A generation ago, we saw what happens when you stop the funding and America stiffed its friends. As a matter of fact, we all know just this morning Iran captured 15 British sailors. This bill prevents us from responding from Kuwait to help our strong allies of British in an emergency. We show weakness, and the world knows it.

Just think back to the dark day in history when we saw visions of American marines airlifting Vietnamese out of the U.S. embassy. You remember that. That is what happens when America makes a commitment; Congress cuts the funding, and we go home with our tails between our legs.

The brave marines who died on that day in 1975 while innocent people desperately clung to life on a rope tied to a helicopter are a testimony to what happens when Congress cuts the funding and we leave without finishing the job.

We can't let that happen again. And I don't think any of you on either side in this Chamber wants that to happen. Frankly, we all want our troops to come home, when the job is done. We want to win. Internationally announcing our timelines for withdrawal literally hands the enemy our war plan and gives them hope that they will win if they just wait it out. What world superpower would do such a thing?

We are the United States of America. We are the premier military force on the globe. We are the land of the free and the home of the brave. Surely we do not go around announcing to the world how we will conduct and win a war. Surrendering is not an option, and neither do I think abandoning our troops is an option.

Look around you. We are all America. Do you want to lose in Iraq? Voting to set a hard exit date for U.S. troops in Iraq and imposing strict standards for deploying forces gives hope to the enemy, and it is a prescription for failure. Worse, forcing Members of Congress to decide on this issue when the bill is cluttered with excess money for spinach and peanuts is abhorrent, infuriating, and ill-advised.

My dear colleagues, if you really want to debate the merits of a time

withdrawal, give each Member in Congress an up or down vote so we can vote our conscience. The sweeteners in this bill are political bribery, and our troops deserve more than this.

Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot abandon our men and women in uniform for politically charged benchmarks wrapped up in fat-cat constituent projects. If we learned anything from the brave Marines who died trying to save innocent people that day at the embassy in Vietnam, and JOHN, you know this, it is that the marines never quit. Neither should we.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, to close the debate I yield the remainder of our time to the distinguished Speaker of the House.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary leadership of Mr. DAVID OBEY, who understands that the strength of our country is indeed measured in our military might but also in the health and well-being of the American people.

Thank you for bringing this important legislation to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, today is indeed an historic day. Today, this new Congress will take the first step: it will vote to end the war in Iraq.

Any statement on the war in Iraq must begin with a tribute to our troops. Today and every day we thank our troops for their courage, for their patriotism, for the sacrifice that they and their families are willing to make.

For 4 years and under the most demanding and dangerous conditions imaginable, they have worked together to do everything that was asked of them. As Members of Congress, our first responsibility under the Constitution, the preamble to the Constitution to which we take an oath of office, is to provide for the common defense. We here in this body have an obligation to work together to do that for the American people.

Mr. JOHNSON, our colleague, you, PATRICK MURPHY, and everyone in between who has served our country have helped make it the home of the brave and the land of the free. I salute you both.

I would like to also acknowledge two people who have been the champions of our troops and experts on our national security in this body. The two of them are the leading proponents on the legislation that is on the floor today: the Chair of the Armed Services Committee, IKE SKELTON; and the Chair of the Defense Appropriations Committee, JACK MURTHA. The two of them care deeply about the well-being of our troops, the readiness of our troops and its importance to our national security, and they are proposing that we pass this legislation today.

I have said from the beginning of this war, this war is a grotesque mistake. Last year's bipartisan Iraq Study Group said: "The situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating." They called for action.

The facts on the ground are these: after 4 years, Iraq is in chaos and the

government is not being held accountable. The administration is sending troops into the battle who are not mission-ready.

□ 1215

And when they come home, our veterans are not being honored as the heroes they are. The revelation of appalling conditions at Walter Reed Hospital and VA facilities across the Nation remind us, once again, that our troops are being sent into a war without the right preparation to welcome them home when they return. What kind of message does that send to our troops?

In terms of the chaos in Iraq, our Commander in Iraq, General Petraeus, recently said, "There is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq." General Petraeus. Yet, the President's response to escalating levels of violence is to deploy more troops, a strategy that has been tried and failed, tried and without success three times already.

In the short time since the escalation began, disturbing facts have come to light.

The admission by General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that he is, "not comfortable" with the readiness of Army units in the United States.

The declaration whereby the Department of Defense has finally admitted that elements of a civil war do exist in Iraq; in fact, it is even worse than that.

Yesterday, in terms of reconstruction, the conclusion of the Special Inspector General that the failure of the reconstruction effort in Iraq was caused by a lack of planning, coordination and oversight. In fact, more than \$10 billion has disappeared, with no accountability. Waste, fraud and abuse are rampant in the reconstruction in Iraq.

How are we going to win the hearts and minds if the money is disappearing in thin air? We must address those and other facts about the war in Iraq.

The bill we debate today, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act, does that by rebuilding our military, honoring our promises to our veterans, holding the Iraqi Government accountable, and enabling us to bring our troops home.

Rather than sending more troops into the chaos that is the Iraqi civil war, we must be focused on bringing the war to an end. We can do that by passing this bill that transforms the performance benchmarks that have already been endorsed by President Bush and the Iraqi Government into requirements.

When those benchmarks are met, or when it becomes clear, after a reasonable amount of time, that they will not be met, the bill requires that our troops leave Iraq on a schedule that our former colleague, Lee Hamilton, a cochair of the Iraq Study Group, called responsible, not precipitate.

Benchmarks without deadlines are just words. And after 4 years of this war, words are not enough.

As Former National Security Advisor Brzezinski wrote in a letter endorsing this bill, "It is clear that a different approach is needed if the Iraqis are to be encouraged to make the political accommodations necessary to promote stability and national reconciliation." That should have been happening a long, long time ago.

Bring the troops home too soon? It is too late for that, 4 years into a war, a war in which we have been engaged longer than we were in World War II.

This bill, in its wisdom, calls upon the Defense Department to adhere to its own readiness standards. The benchmarks were endorsed by the President and the Iraqi Government. The guidelines for the readiness standards are the Defense Department's own. Those standards are intended to assure that before our troops are sent into harm's way, they have the training and the equipment they need to enable them to perform their missions successfully. That simply is not happening.

The war in Iraq has produced a national security crisis, well described by Mr. MURTHA and Mr. SKELTON and others in the course of the day. Our readiness is at its lowest level since the Vietnam war. By addressing that crisis, the bill supports the troops, supports the troops, and protects the American people.

How do we support the troops by sending them into harm's way without the proper training and equipment, without the proper dwell time at home, and taking them there and overextending their stays and redeploying them over and over again? This bill says, adhere to your own guidelines.

Over and over again, Senator REID, the Democratic leader in the Senate, and I have appealed to the President to have a new direction in Iraq, change the mission from combat to training, enabling us to redeploy our troops for limited purpose in Iraq. Engage in diplomacy, encourage the Iraqis to engage in the regional diplomacy so necessary to bring stability to the region. Have real reconstruction. Real reconstruction, reform it; reconstruction, not corruption. And have the political change that is necessary, amend the Constitution to relieve the civil unrest and strife that has produced so much violence.

When we do that, we can bring our troops home. We can redeploy them out of Iraq, and we can turn our attention to the real war on terror in Afghanistan.

A matter of weeks ago I was in Afghanistan with some of our colleagues, and the commander of the coalition forces there told us, flat out, that if we had not taken our attention away from Afghanistan, if we had stayed focused there, the al Qaeda and the Taliban would not have the opportunity that they have there now to make a comeback. That is where the war on terror is. The war in Iraq is a separate war from the war on terror. It is a separate war.

Again, the American people have lost faith in the President's conduct of this war. The American people see the reality of this war. The President does not.

Today, the Congress has an historic opportunity to vote to end the war in Iraq. Each Member of Congress will make a choice. The world is watching for our decision. The choice is clear. Will we renew the President's blank check for an open-ended war without end, or will we take a giant step to end the war and responsibly redeploy our troops out of Iraq?

The American people want a new direction in Iraq. Today the Congress will provide it. The American people do not support a war without end, and neither should this Congress. I urge an "aye" vote.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to begin the end of American military involvement in Iraq.

I am so troubled by the war that I'm tempted to vote no on the supplemental spending bill (H.R. 1591) and claim a moral victory.

But our actions have consequences. If the war's opponents side with its proponents to defeat this bill, we will have won a moral victory at an unacceptable cost. It will give the President and our Republican colleagues the result they're hoping for. They know if the bill fails, the House will pass legislation to give the President a blank check to do whatever he wants in Iraq.

H.R. 1591 contains legally binding language that will force the President to begin redeploying troops by March 2008 and to completely withdraw them by September 2008. It is the only legislation with a realistic chance of passing that will extract us from the war.

H.R. 1591 makes sure that we give our troops and veterans support they desperately need. It includes significant increases in funding for healthcare services, troop readiness and protection, and military housing. It will fix the scandalous situation at Walter Reed Hospital. And, it requires overdue reforms in Iraq contracting.

The Bush Administration is pursuing a failed, delusional policy. We cannot stabilize Iraq alone and we cannot do so militarily. We must find a diplomatic solution with Iraq's neighbors and the international community. H.R. 1591 puts us on that path, and I urge Members to vote for it.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans Health and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007.

There is no doubt that the conflict in Iraq is now a civil war marked primarily by sectarian violence, pitting Sunnis against Shias, with our troops caught in between. This bill is in fact the most responsible means to get our men and women out of this quagmire.

This legislation does not call for an immediate withdrawal. Instead, the legislation gives Iraq's government a timeline to achieve political and military progress, a timeline already set by President Bush and Iraqi leaders. If Iraq's government fails to meet the benchmarks outlined in the legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by March 2008. If the benchmarks are met by the deadlines established in the legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by September 2008. In doing this,

the legislation creates leverage that the U.S. can use to hold Iraq's government accountable and make it ultimately responsible for creating a political solution to this conflict that will result in American troops coming home.

I acknowledge that Congress should generally avoid trying to micro-manage a war. When decisions need to be made, there is no time for committee hearings or floor votes; the Commander-in-Chief may need to act immediately. However, this Administration, contrary to the facts of the situation on the ground, continues to claim that success is around the corner. The then-Republican Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee stated that "in two or three months if this thing hasn't come to fruition and this level of violence is not under control" then we would need to rethink our policy—he made that statement six months ago.

Some have suggested that any deadline is problematic. However, the Administration's original time estimate for the war was 'six days, six weeks, no more than six months,' so a firm deadline 18 months from now, after four years of this open ended conflict, cannot create any more problems than we already have and in fact sets a date that we can begin to bring our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, today's legislation, for the first time in the four year history of this conflict, finally puts real pressure on the President and Iraq's leaders to bring this war to an end. This bill will begin a responsible process to remove our forces from Iraq.

Foreign Policy Experts Support H.R. 1591. Former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski has stated that "only a political solution will end this war," and that the plan approved by the House today provides "a means to hold the Iraqi government accountable for its performance by conditioning U.S. support to the meeting of benchmarks already endorsed by President Bush and Iraqi leaders."

Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright recently stated, "the bottom line is that there must be a political settlement in Iraq that will end the civil war and reduce the level of insecurity to something that can be managed. With a settlement, we could withdraw gradually, with mission accomplished. Without a settlement, our troops can do little good and might as well come home sooner rather than later."

In a letter to House Appropriations Committee Chairman DAVID OBEY, former Congressman, 9/11 Commissioner and co-chair of the Iraq Study Group, Lee Hamilton said that "a strategy of sustained pressure on the Iraqi government to meet benchmarks on national reconciliation, security, and improving the lives of the Iraqi people—backed by clear conditionality of U.S. support—has the best chance of advancing stability in Iraq." Congressman Hamilton added under the House proposal, "the President retains his flexibility and authority as commander-in-chief."

High Ranking Military Officials have questioned our current policy in Iraq.

Former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Gen. Wesley Clark (Ret.), former President of the National Defense University Lt Gen. Robert G. Gard, Jr. (Ret.), former Deputy Commander of Multinational Force Iraq Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, current Deputy Commander of Multinational Force Iraq Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, and First Head of Training of Troops in Iraq Maj. Gen Paul Eaton (Ret.), have all pointed out that the solution in Iraq is primarily political, diplomatic and economic.

In an open letter to Congress, several retired generals and other high ranking military officials stated that the situation in Iraq is "grave and deteriorating" and that top military officials have "consistently acknowledged that the repeated and lengthy deployments are straining" the U.S. military.

General David Petraeus, the new Commander of Multinational Force Iraq, recently declared that "there is no military solution to a problem like that in Iraq."

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, today, I voted for the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act because it provides our Nation's returning troops and veterans with the care they need and deserve, and makes our country more secure by setting forth a new, responsible course in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The people of my District have told me that after four years and thousands of lives lost, they are looking to Congress to ensure that our commitment in Iraq is not open-ended, that there is not a blank check on American lives, and that the Iraqi government will be held accountable.

While I have serious concerns about some aspects of this legislation, and, in general, do not support an absolute, Congressionally-mandated timetable in Iraq, I believe that, on balance, this legislation does more good than harm. Ideally, I would have preferred a more bipartisan approach, especially on an issue of this magnitude.

I am deeply disappointed in my Party's leadership for insisting on a timetable instead of working with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I am also disappointed that leadership saw fit to include millions of dollars for unrelated spending projects for shrimp farmers and peanut storage facilities. I will be working with my colleagues to remove these provisions as this bill goes to conference.

Our sons and daughters are in harm's way, however, and I cannot in good conscience withhold the resources they need while we continue what is likely to be a lengthy debate in Washington.

I also believe that as the Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, I have a unique responsibility to our veterans.

I am working hard to make caring for our veterans a national priority, and this legislation is a good start. It secures a much-needed \$1.7 billion for veterans' health care, including \$550 million to get rid of the maintenance backlog that will help ensure veterans' facilities are clean and well-maintained.

This bill provides \$20 million to clean up the mess at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. These funds, combined with the Dignity for Wounded Warriors Act of 2007—which I introduced last month—are an important first step.

By voting this emergency supplemental down, Congress would send a distressing and insulting message to our injured soldiers, veterans and their loved ones that its years of neglectful under-funding and failed oversight of Walter Reed would go on and on.

This bill also makes our country more secure. It provides our troops with the resources they need to fight al Qaeda and other terrorists in an increasingly hostile situation in Afghanistan. For too long, the situation in Afghanistan has gone under the radar while al Qaeda and elements of the Taliban have grown stronger.

In Iraq, we are setting forth a new, responsible course that demands that the Iraqis take responsibility for their own security and stability. That requires the Iraqi government to meet its own benchmarks.

This is precisely the type of plan the bipartisan Iraq Study Group outlined just a few months ago. The distinguished members of that panel, including James Baker, Lee Hamilton and Arizona's own Sandra Day O'Connor, believed, as I do, that benchmarks are an appropriate way to chart the Iraqi government's progress, or lack thereof.

Among these benchmarks are quelling sectarian violence, disarming sectarian militias and developing a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis. Holding the Iraqi government accountable is imperative because they have not always lived up to their promises.

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, this week we lost another four soldiers from Fort Bliss to an IED attack in Iraq. That makes a total of 35 troops from El Paso who went to Iraq and didn't come home.

Remember, 35 is not just a number. It's not an abstract concept. Thirty-five is the number of families suffering—aunts and uncles, grandparents, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, children. There are friends, classmates, teachers, coaches, fellow soldiers, colleagues, and so many others who are connected to the lives of our lost heroes.

The cost of this war has been too high not just in terms of lives lost and warriors wounded. We have poured taxpayers' money into Iraq. We have spent 500 billion—half a trillion!—dollars to that country. And as we have increased our investment in Iraq, we have less and less to show for it. Rather than progress, our billions of dollars have produced civil war.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the Iraq War, my colleagues know two things about me. One, I opposed this war from the beginning. It was a mistake. Two, since the Iraq War began, I have been committed to our troops and to supporting the best possible outcome.

As a Vietnam veteran I know what combat is about. I have visited Iraq seven times. I have been to Afghanistan many times. I know what our troops require. I have worked out of the spotlight behind the closed doors of the Intelligence Committee and in the Armed Services Committee. My focus has been providing our soldiers with the tools they need to complete their mission and return home safely—body and vehicle armor, IED jammers, and timely, accurate intelligence.

And I'm proud of that work. I'm saddened that our troops didn't have the protection they needed right off the bat, and I'm ashamed we went to war with bad intelligence, but I'm proud of the work we've done in committee to set things right when we could.

But today we send a strong message, that it is long overdue for the Iraqis to stand up for their country, for the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their security and for their political decisions.

If Iraq is to become a democracy—and we're willing to stay and help them with training, other support functions—but after four years it's time that they accept responsibility for their own future. And that's what this legislation is about.

More importantly, this bill takes care of our troops. It brings them home. And once our troops are home, this bill commits our government to caring for our troops and veterans in

a fashion that reflects the sacrifices they have made for our country.

Mr. Speaker, I've been listening to the arguments of my colleagues on the other side. One thing I'm struck by is how similar the arguments I'm hearing today are to what they've been saying for the past four years. Every step of the way, my colleagues on the other side have been wrong on our policy in Iraq. Yet they pony up the same rhetoric, the same rationale for the same policies that have gotten us nowhere but into the middle of a civil war.

For four long years, our troops have made immeasurable sacrifices in Iraq, and now it is time for the Iraqis to step up and take responsibility for their own security.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit this letter from Connecticut Governor Rell for the RECORD. This letter to Chairman SKELTON echoes the sentiment that has been debated in this Chamber and reaffirms why the bill before us today is so important. As we move forward with a new direction in Iraq, we must address the readiness of our military; we must provide the necessary support and equipment to our troops—this includes the National Guard in Connecticut and across the country.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT,
March 21, 2007.

Hon. IKE SKELTON,
Chairman, House Armed Services Committee,
Washington, DC,
Hon. DUNCAN HUNTER,
Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SKELTON AND RANKING MEMBER HUNTER: I am writing to express my concern regarding the consequences of continued, long-term equipment shortages facing the Connecticut Army National Guard. This issue impacts Connecticut's ability to respond to domestic emergencies as well as meet the requirements of the Global War on Terrorism.

At this time the Connecticut Army National Guard only has 48 percent of its authorized equipment, with 10 percent of that in the possession of Soldiers deployed overseas to Afghanistan and Iraq. Connecticut's shortfall is unfortunately representative of the equipment shortages facing Governors and their Guard units across this Nation. Currently the national average stands at 40 percent of authorized National Guard equipment on-hand within the 54 states and territories.

The equipment shortages in the Connecticut Army National Guard exceed \$200 million. The specific shortages include the following:

Over 200 High-Mobility Multi-Purpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV).

One CH-47D Chinook cargo helicopter.

21 Large Support Vehicles (wreckers, tankers, heavy cargo vehicles).

Over 600 Weapons (rifles, pistols, and crew-served weapons).

Over 1,500 Night Vision Goggles.

The Secretary of Defense's new mobilization policy now requires that units of the Army National Guard meet training requirements and certification prior to mobilization. The certification of these units is now the responsibility of the State Adjutant General. To fully implement this policy, the Army National Guard needs a reasonable density of equipment in order to adequately train and certify Soldiers and their units for war. With the current lack of equipment making this task nearly impossible, this long-awaited policy change is sure to fail.

It is foreseeable that units with less than 40% of their authorized equipment will experience significant difficulties and delays in certification and validation for deployment. This delay could extend the length of mobilization of units and the redeployment of units in theater, thus disrupting the deployment cycle. The shortage of equipment on-hand not only impacts the Army National Guard's ability to train for deployment, but also directly impacts its ability to respond to state emergencies and disasters.

The Army National Guard is a proven, cost-effective, capable combat force in the Global War on Terrorism and an essential state force provider when called to respond at times of domestic disaster and emergency. It is for these reasons, I respectfully request that you consider the urgent need to fully fund and equip our Army National Guard. When the next natural disaster or terrorist act hits, the Nation will be counting on us all to get the response and recovery right. We could make no better investment toward delivering against that expectation than to ensure our National Guard's capabilities are appropriately resourced and robust.

Sincerely,

M. JODI RELL,
Governor.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I rise in opposition to the Fiscal Year 2007 Emergency Supplemental Spending bill.

Earlier this year, our military submitted a request to Congress for emergency funding to protect our brave soldiers, and it is our duty to respond to this important request in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, the legislation before us today includes billions of dollars in non-emergency spending and numerous provisions relating to troop withdrawal not requested by the Administration, which have the potential to delay passage of this vital emergency funding.

Much of the extra spending included in this bill will go to wasteful pork barrel projects and non-emergency subsidy programs, including millions of dollars for spinach farmers in California and peanut storage in Georgia. While I have strongly supported some of the policy provisions added to this bill, such as the minimum wage increase and expanded funding for homeland security, I am concerned that the Democratic leadership is attempting to hold critical resources for our soldiers in limbo in order to force political votes.

Our military leaders on the ground in Iraq have warned that disruptive changes in day-to-day operations will occur without immediate supplemental funding. In fact, the acting Secretary of the Army recently stated that if it does not receive additional funding by the end of April, the military will be forced to start making difficult decisions, such as postponing repairs on equipment. Sadly, rather than providing our military with the tools it has requested, the Democratic leadership is forcing a political agenda, which is certain to lead to an impasse with the Administration and further delay this important funding.

I have disagreed with many aspects of our strategy in Iraq, and I have worked hard to convince our government to change its course in the region and begin pursuing robust diplomacy to end the conflict. Indeed, I am hopeful that my efforts, and those of my colleagues, have prompted the Administration to begin engaging in an intense diplomatic initiative to establish peace and stability, so that our troops may return home to their families. However, when it comes to funding for our soldiers who are serving in harm's way, it is not appropriate

for Congress to set arbitrary timelines for withdrawal or condition military resources based on partisan objectives. It is important that our strategy in Iraq include goals for bringing the troops home, but excluding the judgment of U.S. commanders and mandating an exact deadline for withdrawal—regardless of the situation on the ground—would endanger our brave soldiers.

Mr. Speaker, the President has pledged to veto this legislation due to the inclusion of non-emergency spending and policy provisions. We can not afford to waste precious time arguing over disingenuous political proposals and extraneous pork barrel spending projects. I intend to vote against this bill and I will adamantly oppose any attempts to play politics with funding for our soldiers.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, the matter before us today, the Iraq Supplemental, is before us for the first time. However, this is not the last time that we will vote on this bill. This bill will go to the Senate and from the Senate to a Conference Committee and from there back to the floor of this house. If the President exercises his veto power, we may ultimately vote on this matter as many as three or four times.

Today, I make no commitments about what I will do or how I will vote when this matter comes back to this house. How could I? I don't know what this bill will look like when it comes back . . . I don't know what it will say. Rather, I rise to explain how I will vote today, as this bill comes before this house for the first time.

It is clear to me that today, we have only two options. We can send to the Senate the bill before us, with binding language to end the war or, should this bill fail, we will send a bill that gives the President unchecked power to continue his misguided, mismanaged war without end.

That is the choice today. And my vote will be "yes" to advance the bill which begins to end the war. Reaching this decision has been difficult. My deliberation has been long and thoughtful. The difficulty of the decision may seem somewhat surprising given the rather stark description I just provided of the choice before us. However, there are several reasons why this decision has been hard.

First, the bill before us, despite its binding language to end the war, is far from perfect. It does not end the war soon enough. It mishandles the issue of Iraqi oil. It fails to address necessary safeguards to prevent this President from taking military action in Iran without Congressional authorization. The bill's shortcomings are reason enough for a no vote.

Second, until today . . . until this vote . . . I have played a different role. My job yesterday, and the day before (like so many war opponents) was to fight to make the language in this bill stronger and to make this legislation better. And having failed to accomplish all I sought to achieve provides me with another reason to vote no.

Third, until this day I have voted against all of the Iraqi war spending bills. I strongly favor using the power of the purse to end the war. That this binding language to end the war is attached to a war funding bill provided me with yet another reason to vote no.

Many on the left have invoked the words of Saul Alinsky in describing today's vote: ". . . I start from where the world is, as it is, not as I would like it to be," he says in his book Rules for Radicals. "That we accept the world

as it is does not in any sense weaken our desire to change it into what we believe it should be—it is necessary to begin where the world is if we are going to change it to what we think it should be," Alinsky continues. So today we start where this congressional world is, with this imperfect bill as the vehicle to begin to end the war.

The choice is clear, today we can begin to end the war, or we can stand in the way of doing so. I will vote to end the war.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today's vote is very difficult for me.

I support the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act is a significant improvement over the President's failed Iraq policies. For years, Bush has sent our troops into harms way without the proper equipment. Today's legislation aims to hold the Administration accountable for its own readiness standards—and for the benchmarks President Bush himself proposed for Iraqi government performance. This bill also goes further toward providing an actual end date for this war than any other legislation that has reached the House floor.

I applaud Speaker PELOSI, JACK MURTHA, and DAVE OBEY for this significant achievement. I wish I could support my Speaker today and vote with the overwhelming majority of my Democratic colleagues. But, I can't vote "yes."

I ran for Congress because of my strong opposition to our government's unyielding commitment to the Vietnam War. I didn't think it made sense for American men and women to die for the half-truths of the Johnson and Nixon Administrations. Today, I don't think it makes any more sense for lives to be lost for the outright lies of the Bush regime.

I voted against the original resolution authorizing the President to take military action against Iraq. At the time, I said I didn't trust this president and his advisors.

During the war's four long years, nothing has happened to convince me otherwise. On the contrary, the Bush Administration has repeatedly misled the American people about Iraq. They lied to Congress about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, about the cost and length of the war, and about meeting arbitrary benchmarks.

Their goalposts keep moving. The amount of money they requested for this supplemental alone is nearly twice the amount they initially projected the war would cost in its entirety.

Throughout my career in Congress, I've voted against defense spending and against war. Building new weapons systems and waging war doesn't solve problems. If the last four years are any indication, it actually makes them worse.

The longer we stay in Iraq, the higher the cost of this senseless war. Unless we withdraw immediately, the Shiite-Sunni civil war will continue taking the lives of additional American troops and Iraqi civilians. Education, health care, and other domestic needs will go under-funded in America while additional billions are spent in Iraq. And our international allies will further doubt our actions and intentions around the world.

Despite my utmost respect for my colleagues who crafted this bill, I can't in good conscience vote to continue this war. Nor, however, can I vote "no" and join those who think today's legislation goes too far toward withdrawal.

That's why I'm making the difficult decision to vote "present." My vote should be interpreted as opposing the war's continuation while permitting this Congress—under Speaker PELOSI's leadership—to deliver a strong message to President Bush that his blank check to wage war has been canceled.

I urge my colleagues to vote their consciences and help end the war in Iraq.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, no votes in Congress are more wrenching or difficult than those involving war; whether that vote involves initiating combat, or in this instance, steps to bring about the end. The consequences are profound, uncertainty about the right course is great, and there are strong feelings on all sides.

Every member of Congress is committed to the security of this Nation and to supporting our troops and their families. There are legitimate differences about how best to achieve those goals, but the core commitment to security and to support of our troops should not be doubted or questioned, regardless of where one stands on this matter.

Before the first vote authorizing force in Iraq in 2002, I asked fundamental questions of the President: 'What will the cost be in human casualties on all sides? What are the international and potential regional scenarios that might be developed? What is our long term strategy for the region?' I also asked about the economic costs to our Nation and the world, and about the likelihood of religious conflicts leaving our soldiers caught between warring religious factions with grievances that are centuries old. I asked what provisions had been made to care for the wounded and their families when they return? I called for greater commitment to resolving the Israeli/Palestinian issues and for reducing our Nation's dependence on petroleum. Finally, knowing well the history of the region, I asked how long our commitment was expected to last if hostilities were initiated.

Not one of these questions was answered by President Bush, Secretary Rumsfeld or any member of the administration. That is why I voted "no" on that initial resolution. Sadly, the same questions remain today and they have still not been answered by the President, which is why I will vote "yes" on the bill before the House today.

For the sake of our Nation's security, for the safety of our troops, for the sake of our economy at home, for the sake of our international standing, we must say to the Iraqi leaders and to the world, 'We have removed a dictator from power, we have disarmed a tyrant, elections have been held, and a constitution is in place. We have shed the blood of our finest, we have indebted our children, we have tried to help rebuild infrastructure and put in place the basis of a democratic republic. Now, it is up to the Iraqi people themselves to find a political solution that is in everyone's interest and will lead to an end to the bloodshed.' Our Nation cannot and should not attempt to impose that solution indefinitely; it must come from the Iraqis themselves.

Today's bill says just that. It provides the necessary funds to continue to support our soldiers in the field. It adds much needed resources to ensure they receive care when they come home. It addresses needed priorities within our own Nation. And, most importantly, it says affirmatively, there will be an end to our role in combat in Iraq and it is time

for our Nation, for the Iraqis, and for the world, to begin to prepare for that time. This cannot go on forever.

Those who talk about staying the course without end, as well as those who would call for opposing this bill because they want the war to end tomorrow, must all recognize that in the process of this conflict, our overall military readiness has been profoundly impaired and our Nation is now vulnerable should other, more severe, threats emerge elsewhere in the world. At the same time, our local preparedness of the National Guard is in tatters. Our Guard lacks key resources, equipment, and manpower to respond to fires, floods, or other disasters or to join in serious conflicts elsewhere if called upon to do so. This bill, quite rightly, seeks to correct these deficits.

The reality before us today is that we cannot immediately stop funding for our forces or neglect the readiness deficits that now endanger our Nation. That would be irresponsible and would leave our soldiers on the ground and our citizens at home and abroad in greater danger. It would also endanger the lives and hopes of the Iraqi people themselves and leave them vulnerable to extremists and chaos.

At the same time, however, it would be equally irresponsible to allow this hemorrhaging of blood and money, this neglect of our own Nation's needs here at home, to continue unchecked. This legislation changes the direction for our Nation and says the Iraqi's must change the direction of their Nation. They must take responsibility for their own security, share their oil wealth equitably with their own citizens, and establish fundamental constitutional reforms. This bill requires that our President must certify that such things are being done.

Far from 'tying the hands' of the President, this legislation gives him much needed direction. If it becomes law, President Bush must at long last say that his own people, the American people, in the constitutional democratic republic that is our Nation, and that he is sworn to defend, have spoken through their representatives and have said it is time for change. It will soon be up to the Iraqi's themselves to determine the fate of their own Nation so that we can, at long last, may again determine the fate of ours.

If you care about the security of this Nation, vote "yes" to restore our military readiness. If you care about our soldiers, vote "yes" to give them the equipment they need while deployed and the care they need when they return home. If you want to see an end to this conflict, vote "yes" to begin the process that will at last bring that about.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act.

I voted against this war 5 years ago and believe we should never have gone into Iraq.

But as a veteran, I stand by our troops and have always committed to providing for them regardless of politics.

And H.R. 1591 supports our troops before, during, and after service. It mandates proper training and equipment, it requires that our troops get the rest they need between deployments to stay sharp, and provides for our wounded as they return from battle.

This bill also sets deadlines for the Iraqi government so that we can start shifting responsibility to the Iraqi people and bring our troops home by 2008 at the very latest.

Mr. Speaker, we have 160,000 American troops on the ground in Iraq right now, many of which lack proper equipment and training.

We also have 32,000 wounded soldiers from the Iraq conflict who need medical attention and assistance to get back on their feet.

Unfortunately, we have a veteran healthcare system that is failing. Report after report indicates under funding, neglect, improper conduct, and almost no accountability.

If the tragedies at Walter Reed Army Medical Center have taught us anything, it is that wartime spending shouldn't just stop with tanks and guns.

It needs to extend to taking care of our wounded heroes and their families after they return from the battlefield.

Mr. Speaker, I recently visited our returning veterans at Walter Reed Medical Center. And what I saw there just broke my heart.

Some of our wounded told me their doctors weren't giving them the attention they needed and that they even had to prove to the medical staff that they were injured!

One man in particular really touched my heart. I met a wounded soldier from my home State of California who told me about his father who had dropped everything, closed his business, and flew to Washington so that he could take care of his son full time.

This young man's family not only had to risk their son for this war, they're now sacrificing their livelihood to help him recuperate.

And yet sadly, he's one of the lucky ones.

What about the majority of military families who simply can't afford to quit their jobs, move cross-country and take care of their husbands, wives, and children?

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the American people shouldn't have to put up with these hardships.

They shouldn't have to worry that their family members in uniform are getting the best care possible.

How poorly does it reflect on us as a Nation when we don't adequately take care of our veterans when they come back home?

Veterans healthcare is one of the most neglected and underfunded programs in this country.

This isn't just embarrassing, it is unconscionable.

We have a duty to minimize the risk to our troops and their families by making sure they have the very best training, the finest equipment, and stay deployed only as long as absolutely necessary.

Furthermore, we have a moral obligation to take care of each and every soldier who has been injured in the line of duty in defense of our great Nation.

H.R. 1591 addresses these responsibilities and that's why I will vote in favor of this bill today.

The American people have already paid too high a price for this war.

3,233 soldiers have died in Iraq, including 10 men from my own district.

We owe it to these heroes to set a deadline for withdrawal and let our soldiers move on with their lives.

We owe it to our families who are praying for the safety of their loved ones to take care of our troops every step of the way.

That's why I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1591.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, 9 years ago on this floor, Congressman Floyd

Spence, the Republican Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, had this to say about the bill withdrawing American forces from Bosnia: "The time is long overdue for Congress to express its will on behalf of the American people."

I couldn't say it better myself. In this place, the People's House, the will of the people must mean something. Elections must mean something. And if the 2006 election represented anything, it was that the American people were tired of the lack of oversight and accountability from this Congress, and they were tired of a war with growing numbers of casualties, and mounting costs with no end in sight. They asked for a new direction from this Congress, and The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act, is the answer to their call.

There are many of us who feel uncomfortable giving this President another dime to spend to perpetuate this misguided and shortsighted strategy in Iraq. But I come here to support this legislation because for the first time since the start of this disastrous engagement, Congress is making sure that any further spending on this war comes with unprecedeted support for our troops and veterans, and a real plan to redeploy our forces and resources to fights that we can still win.

This Administration has been wrong on just about everything about Iraq—there were no weapons of mass destruction, we were not welcome as liberators, the country has plunged into a civil war, and we have no exit strategy.

The days of issuing a blank check to this Administration with no questions asked are over. As we enter the fifth year of this war, people in Connecticut and across the country demand a change in our policy in Iraq. This bill is the change that they asked for.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act.

This legislation will support our troops and veterans, hold the Bush Administration and Iraqi government accountable and bring our soldiers home by August 2008 or sooner. It will also provide emergency funding for critical programs that have suffered from years of neglect.

This supplemental appropriations bill provides emergency funding for critical programs that have long been underfunded by the Republicans. It includes \$750 million to correct the funding shortfall in the State Children's Health Insurance program so that hundreds of thousands of children will not lose their health care. It provides \$2.9 billion for Katrina relief and recovery. The bill also includes \$2.6 billion for homeland security needs left unaddressed by Congressional Republicans, as well as \$1.7 billion to remedy the unconscionable state of our military and veterans' health care systems. All of these issues are emergencies in their own right and rise to the level of inclusion in this emergency supplemental spending bill.

The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act requires the Iraqi government to meet the security, political and economic benchmarks established by the President in his address of January 10th, including improvements in the performance of the Iraqi security forces, a greater commitment by the Iraqi government to national reconcili-

ation, and reductions in the levels of sectarian violence in Iraq.

If the Iraqi government is unable to meet these benchmarks by July 7 of this year, redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq would begin immediately and must be completed by January of 2008. If the benchmarks are met, the latest possible starting date for redeployment would be March 1 of next year, with complete withdrawal by August 31.

The bill ensures that our troops have the tools and resources they need to do the job they have been asked to do. It prohibits the deployment of troops who are not fully trained, equipped and protected according to current Department of Defense standards. The President can only deploy unprepared troops if he certifies, in writing, to Congress, that deploying those troops in the national interest. The bill also provides funding so the Veterans Administration can meet the obligations of a new generation of veterans, particularly by ensuring that they will have the medical care they need.

I have been an outspoken opponent of military action against Iraq since the day the administration started beating the war drums. My preference would have been to vote for a stronger bill that would bring our troops home even sooner than this one. I am disappointed that the bill includes waivers to allow the President to send less than fully-equipped troops into battle. I am also unhappy that the provision requiring the president to get Congressional approval for an attack on Iran was removed from the bill. I have additional concerns about the section of the bill that allows an unspecified number of U.S. troops to remain in Iraq after the August 2008 deadline to train Iraqis and fight terrorism.

However, I support this legislation in spite of these deficiencies because I believe it is an affirmative step towards our ultimate goal of ending the war. This bill is not everything that I would have liked, but it represents a critical turning point. No longer will this body uncritically hand over billions of dollars for the President to wage endless war. For the first time, Congress is considering binding legislation that sets a date certain for the end of the Iraq war. I will not help the Republicans defeat it.

The President and most Congressional Republicans ask that we continue to fund this war with "no strings attached." But the United States cannot afford an open-ended commitment to a war without end. It is the responsibility of this Congress to devise a means to end the U.S. combat role in Iraq so that we can reclaim our position of leadership in the world and direct our resources back towards urgent needs here at home. I believe that this bill moves us towards these goals in an effective and responsible way.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, today marks an historic vote, one that will go down in history and signal a turning point in the war in Iraq. Much like the vote authorizing the President to go to war in 2002, this vote will be a defining moment, and one that will be discussed and debated for years to come.

While I do not believe this is a perfect bill, I personally would vote to bring our troops home today if that was an option, in fact this bill is the best compromise that could be adopted. Finally, there is an end in sight to this ill-conceived war, and Congress is sending a message to the Iraqis, that our sons and

daughters will not continue to shed blood to defend their country indefinitely.

We are sending the Iraqi government a message, that the time to step up their own efforts to bring peace and stability to their own land is fast approaching.

Mr. Speaker, this vote is one of conscience and the decision to vote for or against it is deeply personal. But let us make no mistake, the consequences of our actions here today will be widely felt and the impact will be broad and far-ranging. The American people are watching closely, and the eyes of the world are on us as well.

Today's vote is an example of what makes America great and what makes our democracy so strong. The fact that we, as elected Members of Congress, can express the will of the American people and compel the Administration to alter its misguided policies of war, demonstrates the essence of American society.

After years of having a free reign, with no accountability, consultation, or oversight from Congress, the President will now be compelled to listen to the will of Congress, and therefore the will of the American people.

Winning the war in Iraq will require a political and diplomatic offensive, not sending more of our men and women into harm's way to facilitate a civil war. With a clear conscience, but a heavy heart I cast my vote for the Iraq supplemental. My only solace is that we finally can see an end to this ill-fated war.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1591, legislation that would chart a new course for the United States in Iraq. I commend the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. OBEY, and the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURTHA, for their leadership and for drafting a measure that answers Americans' calls for real change.

Four years after our nation initiated military operations in Iraq, America demands a new approach to this open-ended conflict that has resulted in the deaths of more than 3,200 service members, including at least 25 with strong ties to Rhode Island. Our operations in Iraq have endangered the ability of our armed forces to respond to other crises, distracted from efforts to fight al Qaeda and the Taliban, and damaged our international reputation. Our military now finds itself in the middle of a civil war, and it is time to bring our troops home.

Despite calls by the Iraq Study Group for a new approach to the "grave and deteriorating" situation in Iraq, President Bush has proposed escalating military operations, sending more troops to prosecute a war mismanaged from the start by the civilian leadership. Fortunately, we have another choice. The House of Representatives will vote today on an emergency spending bill that would, for the first time, set a clear deadline to end U.S. combat operations in Iraq. As one who originally voted against giving the President authority to invade Iraq, I will proudly support this Democratic measure as the first real step to end the war.

Last November, an American public dissatisfied with President Bush's Iraq policy elected a Democratic Congress that promised a new direction. Having heard frustration from so many Rhode Islanders, I have worked with the Democratic leadership to develop a better strategy. I spoke of my conversations with military families and advocacy groups to underscore the sincerity and passion of Rhode Islanders' call for change. Meanwhile, Demo-

cratic leaders consulted with an array of current and former military commanders, foreign policy experts and advocates, with committees holding more than 100 hearings on operations in Iraq.

The bill before us is the direct result of those efforts and reflects the will of the American people. Not only does it demand accountability by establishing clear benchmarks for Iraqis to take control of their own security, but it also sets a deadline to bring our troops home—no later than August 2008. This measure sends a clear signal to the President and the world that we do not intend to remain an occupying force in Iraq.

The bill also addresses other serious problems facing our military and their families. President Bush has recommended sending more troops into harm's way, but has not provided the resources they need upon their return home, as demonstrated by reports of sub-standard care at facilities such as Walter Reed Medical Center. With nearly 25,000 American troops—among them 93 Rhode Islanders—injured in Iraq thus far, the House spending bill provides an additional \$2.8 billion for military health care and \$1.7 billion for veterans' health care to ensure that those who have sacrificed for our nation get the support and treatment they deserve.

Furthermore, the bill adds critical funds to restore our military readiness and re-equip National Guard and Reserve forces, which face major shortages as a result of operations in Iraq. Lt. General H. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, has stated that 88 percent of Army Guard units and 45 percent of Air Guard units are unprepared for deployment as a result of equipment shortages. We depend on our National Guard to protect us in the event of catastrophes or natural disasters, and we must ensure they are fully prepared to defend the Nation they serve.

In Congress, I have constantly strived to protect our national security and to support our military, which has served valiantly in some incredibly challenging missions. At this point, though, the Iraqis' problems no longer require a U.S. military solution. The underlying causes of violence are primarily political and must be addressed as such. Unlike the President's plan, which promises more of the same failed policy, the Democratic approach will support the political process to end sectarian divisions in Iraq, help rebuild the economy and infrastructure, and promote maximum diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the violence.

Some have argued that the bill does not go far enough. Like them, I support an even earlier exit for our troops and have co-sponsored legislation to redeploy them out of Iraq by December 31, 2007. However, there is no question that the Democratic measure being offered marks a major turning point and answers Rhode Islanders' pleas by setting a firm deadline for withdrawal. This is a tremendous step—one which serves our troops, our constituents, and our conscience—and I will wholeheartedly support it.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution.

Is this the perfect solution? No. But how can there be a perfect solution to a war so imperfectly devised, so catastrophically planned, so horribly managed by the Bush administration?

This resolution turns in a better direction. It provides health care to our veterans.

It provides support to our warfighters.

It demands accountability from our President.

And it creates the process to redeploy our troops.

I voted for the use of force in Iraq, Mr. Speaker. I believed then, as I believe now, that the Middle East is an exceedingly dangerous region on the brink of an eruption that threatens global security.

But the war in Iraq did not stabilize the Middle East. It has destabilized it.

Before the war in Iraq, Iran was concerned about Israel. Today, Israel is concerned about Iran.

Before the war in Iraq, there was no such thing as "Al Qaeda in Iraq". Today, there is.

Before the war in Iraq, our military was capable of swiftly and decisively responding to multiple threats, foreign and domestic. Just yesterday, the New York National Guard reported to my office that it has only 37 percent of the mission critical transportation it needs to respond to a homeland security emergency in my state: whether it's a terrorist attack or a severe hurricane.

This resolution reinvests in the priorities we need. And it says to both the Iraqi government and the Bush Administration:

"No more blank checks. No more endless commitments."

Many are troubled with the inclusion of a strategic withdrawal of our troops between December of this year and August of next. Mr. Speaker.

And I must be honest. I have struggled with this as well. The decision should be hard. It should be contentious. It should torment us all. Because no matter what we do, the stakes are high. The consequences are great.

If you lean to the right, an August 2008 redeployment is way too soon.

If you lean to the left, an August 2008 redeployment is way too long.

I reached my own judgment a few months ago. Based not on polls, not on politics, not on the convenience of sound-bytes on either side of the aisle and not on righteous absolutism that can only be formulated in a vacuum. I formed it after listening to the Commanding General of CENTCOM testify to the Armed Services Committee that we had until the middle of this year before Baghdad spins out of control. Shortly after that, the Iraq Study Group, after months of non-partisan work and study, reached the judgment that: "By the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq."

The middle of this year to the middle of next year.

Those are the benchmarks, Mr. Speaker. Those are the nonpartisan, nonpolitical, balanced and reasoned benchmarks.

And those benchmarks are contained in this resolution.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me say this: Today Republicans and Democrats will disagree. Fair enough. But it's time to stop thinking about our disagreements and begin working together on our agreements.

Last week, several members of the House Center Aisle Caucus, which I have the privilege of co-chairing, met to discuss cooperating on several Iraq initiatives. This week, I introduced the first of these bipartisan measures with the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. DAVIS), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. CARNEY), the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr.

BOUSTANY). Our resolution requires the President to submit a Status Of Forces Agreement to the Iraq government, just as we have with other governments where we have a military presence. This will send the message that we are not occupiers of Iraq. And we follow the rule of law.

I mention this now, Mr. Speaker, in the hopes that my colleagues who wish to join us in constructive ways forward will join us. That the debate will turn from left and right to forward.

That is what our troops want. That is what our constituents want. That is our obligation.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1591, a pork-laden \$124.3 billion war supplemental that would force U.S. troops to withdraw from Iraq.

I strongly support benchmarks and high accountability for military and political progress in Iraq, but not in a manner that hurts our chances of accomplishing those goals. Under this legislation, U.S. troops would be withdrawn from Iraq unless the President's benchmarks for progress are met by July. This unreasonable requirement would not give General Petraeus enough time to show if the new "troop surge" is effective.

In addition, this bill would force U.S. troops to withdraw by August 2008 regardless of whether the benchmarks are met. Members of Congress should not be dictating strategy to our generals in the field.

The authors of this bill are talking out of both sides of their mouths. In attempting to reach a compromise, they would fund the troop surge while dooming it to failure by not allowing enough time to see if it works. It is clear that a forthright and honest vote on withdrawing U.S. troops would fail. The Majority Party's Leadership has instead chosen to entice Members of Congress with pork-barrel spending in exchange for their vote on this bill.

The Washington Post reported: "House Democratic leaders are offering billions in federal funds for lawmakers" pet projects large and small to secure enough votes this week to pass an Iraq funding bill that would end the war next year."

This so-called "emergency" war supplemental includes non-defense spending such as \$283 million in milk subsidies, \$474 million in peanut subsidies, and \$25 million in spinach subsidies.

This legislation abandons the Majority Party's supposed leadership on fiscal discipline. It is a hypocritical and blatant attempt to gain votes from Members of Congress through special interest spending. The bill includes non-military items such as an increase in the minimum wage, tax relief for small businesses, drought aid, hurricane relief, agricultural subsidies and funds for child health insurance. Each of these items should be debated under regular order in the House.

I strongly support the defense-related spending items in this legislation, including critical equipment for our troops and health care improvements for our veterans such as funding for Walter Reed Army Medical Center. I was also proud to sign the discharge petition to vote on Congressman SAM JOHNSON's legislation to ensure full funding of our troops.

We must demand meaningful progress in Iraq to curb sectarian violence, disarm militias, train security forces and strengthen the arm of the new Iraqi government until Iraq can govern itself. However, H.R. 1591 is clearly not the

answer. Immediately withdrawing U.S. troops would be an irresponsible display of politics that would endanger future generations of Americans.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting against this legislation, and to demand a "clean" war supplemental that meets the needs of our troops without pork-barrel politics.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this important legislation.

This supplemental appropriations bill contains vitally important funding for critical priorities and unmet needs. For example, this bill includes \$1.7 billion more than the President requested for military health care, including funds to correct the scandalous conditions at Walter Reed and other military hospitals. It includes another \$1.7 billion for veterans' health care, \$2.5 billion for improving the readiness of our stateside troops and \$1.4 billion for military housing allowances. A nation at war simply must provide necessary funds to support our troops.

In addition, this legislation includes \$3.1 billion for military construction to implement the BRAC mandates that impact Fort Bragg in my Congressional District and military communities all across the country. It is important to note that the former Republican Congressional Majority failed to pass the military construction appropriations and imperiled these priority projects. This legislation corrects that failure.

Mr. Speaker, the standards and benchmarks in this legislation will assert some measure of oversight and accountability to a war policy that has been tragically mismanaged by this administration for too long. I have resisted supporting date certain language for troop redeployment because it is preferable that the executive branch have the lead in foreign policy in partnership with the legislature. Unfortunately, this Administration has mistakenly interpreted that deference as a blank check for its go-it-alone approach. No more.

The President's speech this week calling for "courage and resolve" demonstrated a continued state of denial. The American people do not need more lectures from this President about resolve. Our troops do not need more lectures about courage. What we need is a new direction to rebuild our military and refocus on the true threat to America from al Qaeda and the Islamic jihadists who attacked us on 9/11. We must deploy our military might to Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere to eliminate Osama bin Laden and the true "grave and gathering threat" to America.

We must pass this legislation to send a wake-up call to the President that "Stay The Course" is no longer an option. Denial is no longer an acceptable policy. I urge my colleagues to support a new direction and vote for this bill.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this Defense Supplemental appropriations bill.

Whatever some may say, I think it would be grossly irresponsible to vote against it. That would be to vote against providing America's men and women in uniform with the equipment and resources they need and against providing them the best health care they may require when they come home.

I understand why some are urging a vote against the bill. Many Americans are frustrated and angry because we are four years into a war the Bush Administration assured us would

be short and decisive. The Administration's misjudgments, lack of planning and poor leadership have made a bad situation worse. So there are many who do not trust the Bush Administration to find a way to end this war, and who believe Congress should simply act to cut off additional funds.

But whatever may be said about the wisdom of invading Iraq four years ago—and I am one who believed it was a mistake to do so—the fact is that we are still deeply engaged in Iraq. We also must finish the job of securing Afghanistan and defeating the Taliban and al-Qaeda. So long as our troops are in the field, we must provide them what they need even as we move to change the mistaken policies of the Administration in Iraq.

This bill begins that change. It includes important language to hold the president accountable to the benchmarks set by his own administration and the Iraqi government.

Those benchmarks were outlined in January, when President Bush announced that the Iraqi government had agreed to pursue all extremists, Shiite and Sunni alike; to deliver Iraqi Security Forces to Baghdad to join in the "surge"; and to establish a strong militia disarmament program. President Bush also announced that Prime Minister Maliki and his government agreed to pursue reconciliation initiatives, including enactment of a hydro-carbon law; conducting of provincial and local elections; reform of current laws governing the de-Baathification process; amendment of the Constitution of Iraq; and allocation of Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects.

By holding the president and the Iraqi government accountable for achieving these benchmarks, this bill will provide General Petraeus and the Administration with the leverage necessary to help the Iraqi government forge a political solution. And we all know that it will take a political solution—not a military one—to end this war.

The bill is an important step toward what I think must be our goal—a responsible end to the war in Iraq, based on a strategy of phased withdrawal of troops, accelerated diplomacy and redeployment that is based on Iraqi stability and not arbitrary deadlines.

It is true that this legislation includes a date certain for withdrawing U.S. combat troops from Iraq. I do not believe this language is wise and were it up to me, this provision would not be included in the bill. As a matter of national security policy, we should steer clear of arbitrary public deadlines and focus instead on realistic goals. Our military needs flexibility to be able to link movements of U.S. troops to the realities of the situation on the ground.

The deadline established in this bill—August of 2008—is far enough away that I believe we may be able to revisit it if need be, and while I find its inclusion troubling, I do not believe in letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. And the bill's language does give the president flexibility to protect U.S. interests, since it allows sufficient troops to remain to protect U.S. military and civilians in Iraq, conduct counterterrorism operations, and train Iraqi Security Forces.

The bill also protects our troops by limiting deployment schedules and setting minimum readiness standards—based on current Defense Department standards—for U.S. troops deploying to the region. The president could

waive these requirements but only by certifying in writing to Congress that waiving them would be in the interest of national security.

The bill also includes many provisions important to our troops, such as funds for military personnel for imminent danger pay, family separation allowances, and basic allowances for housing; funds for recruiting and retention in the Army Reserve and National Guard; and funds to develop countermeasures to prevent attacks from improvised explosive devices. The bill recommends the creation of a new Strategic Readiness Reserve fund, and provides \$2.5 billion for the program, which is intended to improve readiness, training and equipping of U.S. forces not already deployed.

Given the recent revelations about problems with the defense health system at Walter Reed and other facilities across the system, I am very pleased that the bill provides \$2.8 billion for military health care costs and \$1.7 billion for initiatives to address the health care needs of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, particularly those suffering from traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder. Funding is also included to address facility deficiencies so the Department of Veterans Affairs does not have to defer facility maintenance and upkeep in order to provide quality health care services.

The bill also provides \$52.5 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and funds the \$5.9 billion request for the Afghan Security Forces and the \$3.8 billion request for Iraq Security Forces.

And the bill includes \$3.1 billion to fully fund the Pentagon's FY07 request for the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations, which is vitally important for Ft. Carson as it prepares to expand and for other military installations in Colorado.

On the non-military side, the bill includes critically important funding for farmers and ranchers in southeastern Colorado who were recently hit hard by winter storms. Thousands of cattle were killed in storms worse than the October 1997 storm that killed approximately 30,000 cattle and cost farmers and ranchers an estimated \$28 million. The struggles that family agriculture producers and small counties face are significant and are having a negative impact on the livelihood of hundreds of farmers and ranchers and their communities. So I am pleased that the Colorado delegation was successful in persuading the House leadership to include financial assistance for farmers and ranchers, including for those affected by Colorado's recent blizzards, and I am hopeful that the funding will be included in the final conference report.

Mr. Speaker, we have entered the 5th year of the war in Iraq. Already, more than 3,200 of our men and women in uniform have made the ultimate sacrifice in the performance of their duty. More than 24,000 others have been wounded. The Iraqi death toll is at least 60,000, with more than 650,000 other Iraqis displaced and at least one million who have fled to Syria and Jordan and other countries.

Even these heavy costs are not the whole story, because nation-building in Iraq has degraded our ability to counter other threats to our national security around the globe. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am all too aware of the pressures on our active duty and National Guard and reserve soldiers, including a lack of equipment and training, multiple or extended deployments, and

limited time at home between deployments. To be successful, U.S. forces must be trained, equipped, and ready to quickly deploy worldwide. Shortfalls in personnel, equipment, or training increase the risk to our troops and to their mission.

Mr. Speaker, many of us who voted against authorizing the President to rush to war in Iraq were worried that while it would be easy to eliminate the Saddam Hussein regime, the aftermath would be neither easy nor quick. Sadly, our fears have proven to be justified. And now, as the Pentagon has finally admitted in its most recent quarterly report, the situation in Iraq is "properly descriptive of a civil war."

Insisting on keeping our troops in the middle of that kind of internecine war is not a recipe for victory; it is only a prescription for quagmire. And as a new Foreign Relations Council report notes, we bear responsibility for developments within Iraq, but are increasingly without the ability to shape those developments in a positive direction.

We need to be scaling back our military mission in Iraq. We need to make the U.S. military footprint lighter—not in order to hasten defeat or failure in Iraq, but to salvage a critical measure of security and stability in a region of the world that we can ill afford to abandon.

But as we do so, we must work to avoid a collapse in the region—not only because we have a moral obligation to the people of Iraq, but also because our national security has been so badly compromised by the Bush administration's failures there. The President's decision to take the nation to war has made our country less safe. We need to change course and chart a path that enhances our national security and sets the right priorities for the war on terrorism and struggle against extremists.

This bill begins to chart this path, and I will support it.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I support our men and women serving in harm's way, I support America's veterans, and I support of establishing clear benchmarks for progress in Iraq.

Our men and women in Iraq are in the middle of what is becoming an increasingly dangerous civil war. Despite their best efforts to provide security, train Iraqi forces, and pursue terrorists, the violence in Iraq ultimately must be ended by the Iraqi people. The Iraqis must step up, once and for all, and take responsibility for their future.

The Iraq war funding bill is the only proposal on the table that sets enforceable benchmarks for the Iraqi government and makes clear to the Iraqi government that we will not have our soldiers in the middle of a religious civil war indefinitely. Distinguished Hoosier and co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, Lee Hamilton, has said that tying continued U.S. support, including the presence of our troops, to benchmarks is the strongest leverage we have to force the Iraqis to act. He, too, has said that this supplemental—despite its imperfections—should move forward.

In an ideal situation, the President, and not the Congress, would hold the Iraqi government accountable for improving the political and security conditions in its country. However, the Bush Administration has not held the Iraqi government accountable even while the security situation has steadily deteriorated to the point of open civil war between rival religious sects.

In early January, I wrote the President. I asked him what the consequences would be if the Iraqi government failed to meet the benchmarks the President articulated, benchmarks the Iraqi government has agreed to meet, in a nationally televised speech. To this day, I have received no response from the Bush Administration.

In addition to forcing Iraqi accountability, the Iraq war funding bill provides desperately needed funds to ensure that current and future veterans and wounded military personnel receive the care and attention their service and sacrifice deserve. H.R. 1591 includes \$1.3 billion in new funding for veterans' health care. This bill also improves our ability to care for our wounded warriors, with an additional \$2.8 billion for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic-brain injuries, and burns and amputee rehabilitation. Finally, the Iraq war funding bill provides \$20 million to fix Walter Reed Army Medical Center so that the embarrassingly substandard living conditions can be quickly remedied.

This legislation also reaffirms our commitment to fighting terrorism in Iraq and around the globe. Even if the Iraqis fail to meet our benchmarks for progress in Iraq, American forces can still fight and pursue terror groups operating in Iraq while continuing to help train Iraqi security and counter-terrorism forces. The Iraq war funding bill also provides crucial funds to fight a resurgent Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and it provides much-needed money for FBI counter-terrorism initiatives, secures at-risk nuclear materials in other countries and provides money to install radiation detection equipment at overseas ports that are shipping to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I said numerous times during the campaign that Congress must continue providing full funding for our troops in the field—this bill does that by investing \$95.5 billion in our military, including almost \$900 million for new Humvees and \$2.4 billion to improve protections against Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Though I do not like the idea of setting a timeline for the redeployment of our troops, I will not vote against our troops on the field, period. This bill moves us in the right direction by sending a message to the President—and to the Iraqi government—that the situation in Iraq is unacceptable and must change.

The President has previously stated that he hoped Iraqi troops would be serving on the front line and that U.S. troops would primarily be in a training role before the end of this year. This funding bill extends our offensive mission almost one year past the President's own date. We are essentially asking the Iraqis to take ownership of their own country again. That is critical for both Iraq and the United States.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as a proud member of the Progressive and the Out of Iraq Caucuses, I rise in support of H.R. 1591, the "U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act." I commend the leadership of the Speaker and her team and Chairman OBEY and Defense Subcommittee Chairman MURTHA for their patient and careful crafting of the bill.

I stand in strong support of our troops who have performed magnificently in battle with a grace under pressure that is distinctively American. I stand with the American people, who have placed their trust in the President,

the Vice-President, and the former Secretary of Defense, each of whom abused the public trust and patience.

I stand with the American taxpayers who have paid nearly \$400 billion to finance the misadventure in Iraq. I stand with the 3,222 fallen heroes who stand even taller in death because they gave the last full measure of devotion to their country.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I stand fully, strongly, and unabashedly in support of H.R. 1591, which for the first time puts the Congress on record against an open-ended war whose goal line is always moving.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against the 2002 Iraq War Resolution. I am proud of that vote. I have consistently voted against the Administration's practice of submitting a request for war funding through an emergency supplemental rather than the regular appropriations process which would subject the funding request to more rigorous scrutiny and require it to be balanced against other pressing national priorities.

The vote today will put the House on record squarely against the Bush Administration's policy of looking the other way while the Iraqi government fails to govern a country worthy of a free people with as much commitment and dedication to the security and happiness of its citizens as has been shown by the heroic American servicemen and women who risked their lives and, in the case of over 3,000 fallen heroes, lost their lives to win for the Iraqi people the chance to draft their own constitution, hold their own free elections, establish their own government, and build a future of peace and prosperity for themselves and their posterity.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more important issue facing the Congress, the President, and the American people than the war in Iraq. It is a subject upon which no one is indifferent, least of all members of Congress. Many good ideas have been advanced by members of Congress to bring to a successful conclusion the American military engagement in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, nearly every decision reached by a legislative body is a product of compromise. The bill before us is no different. If it was left solely to us, any of us could no doubt add or subtract provisions which we think would improve the bill. Indeed, more than fifty amendments were offered to H.R. 1591, including four submitted by me. In fact, the only amendments voted on by the Rules Committee were two of the amendments I offered, although neither was made in order this time.

The first of these amendments, Jackson Lee Amendment No. 1, would terminate the authority granted by Congress to the President in the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force in Iraq because the objectives for which the authorization was granted have all been achieved. Specifically, Congress authorized the President to use military force against Iraq to achieve the following objectives:

1. To disarm Iraq of any weapons of mass destruction that could threaten the security of the United States and international peace in the Persian Gulf region;

2. To change the Iraqi regime so that Saddam Hussein and his Baathist party no longer posed a threat to the people of Iraq or its neighbors;

3. To bring to justice any members of al Qaeda known or found to be in Iraq bearing responsibility for the attacks on the United

States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001;

4. To ensure that the regime of Saddam Hussein would not provide weapons of mass destruction to international terrorists, including al Qaeda; and

5. To enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

Thanks to the skill and valor of the Armed Forces of the United States we now know for certain that Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction. Thanks to the tenacity and heroism of American troops, Saddam Hussein was deposed, captured, and dealt with by the Iraqi people in such a way that neither he nor his Baathist Party will ever again pose a threat to the people of Iraq or its neighbors in the region. Nor will the regime ever acquire and provide weapons of mass destruction to international terrorists. Also, the American military has caught or killed virtually every member of al Qaeda in Iraq remotely responsible for the 9/11 attack on our country. Last, all relevant U.N. resolutions relating to Iraq have been enforced.

In other words, every objective for which the use of force in Iraq was authorized by the 2002 resolution has been achieved, most with spectacular success thanks to the professionalism and superior skill of our service men and women. The point of my amendment was to recognize, acknowledge, and honor this fact.

My second amendment, Jackson Lee Amendment No. 4, would change the troop reference date for redeployment set forth in section 1904 from March 1, 2008, to December 31, 2007. What this means is that the Government of Iraq will have had more than 3 years since the United States turned over sovereignty to establish a sustainable government with secure borders that can protect its people. I believe that if the Allied Forces could win World War III in less than 4 years, certainly that is enough time for the Government of Iraq to provide for the security of its people, with the substantial assistance of the United States.

While there are many good proposals that have been advanced which are not included in the bill, we ought not to let the perfect become the enemy of the good. This emergency supplemental may not be perfect but it is better—far better—than any legislation relating to the war in Iraq that has ever been brought to the floor far a vote. Let me count the ways.

First, H.R. 1591 ensures that U.S. forces in the field have all of the resources they require. Second, the bill directs more resources to the war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Third it improves healthcare for returning service members and veterans. Fourth, it establishes a timeline for ending the United States participation in Iraq's civil war. Last, it demands accountability by conditioning continued American military involvement in Iraq upon certification by the President that the Iraq Government is making meaningful and substantial progress in meeting political and military benchmarks, including a militia disarmament program and a plan that equitably shares oil revenues among all Iraqis.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to discuss why the American people believe so strongly that the time has come to an end the policy of not placing any demands or conditions on American military assistance to the Government of Iraq.

As Kenneth M. Pollack of the Brookings Institution, and a former senior member of the NSC, brilliantly describes in his essay, "The Seven Deadly Sins Of Failure In Iraq: A Retrospective Analysis Of The Reconstruction," in Middle East Review of International Affairs (December 2006), our trust and patience has been repaid by a record of incompetence unmatched in the annals of American foreign policy.

The Bush administration disregarded the advice of experts on Iraq, on nation-building, and on military operations. It staged both the invasion and the reconstruction on the cheap. It did not learn from its mistakes and did not commit the resources necessary to accomplish its original lofty goals or later pedestrian objectives. It ignored intelligence that contradicted its own views.

It is clear now that the Administration simply never believed in the necessity of a major reconstruction in Iraq. To exacerbate matters the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the White House Office of the Vice President (OVP) worked together to ensure that the State Department was excluded from any meaningful involvement in the reconstruction of Iraq.

The Administration's chief Iraq hawks shared a deeply naive view that the fall of Saddam and his top henchmen would have relatively little impact on the overall Iraqi governmental structure. They assumed that Iraq's bureaucracy would remain intact and would therefore be capable of running the country and providing Iraqis with basic services. They likewise assumed that the Iraqi armed forces would largely remain cohesive and would surrender whole to U.S. forces. The result of all this was a fundamental lack of attention to realistic planning for the postwar environment.

As it was assumed that the Iraqis would be delighted to be liberated little thought was given to security requirements after Saddam's fall. The dearth of planning for the provision of security and basic services stemmed from the mistaken belief that Iraqi political institutions would remain largely intact and therefore able to handle those responsibilities.

But there were too few Coalition troops, which meant that long supply lines were vulnerable to attack by Iraqi irregulars, and the need to mask entire cities at times took so much combat power that it brought the entire offensive to a halt.

It was not long before these naive assumptions and inadequate planning conjoined to sow the seeds of the chaos we have witnessed in Iraq.

The lack of sufficient troops to secure the country led to the immediate outbreak of lawlessness resulting in massive looting and destruction dealt a stunning psychological blow to Iraqi confidence in the United States, from which the country has yet to recover. We removed Saddam Hussein's regime but we did not move to fill the military, political, and economic vacuum. The unintended consequence was the birth of a failing state, which provided the opportunity for the insurgency to flourish and prevented the development of governmental institutions capable of providing Iraqis with the most basic services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, and a minimally functioning economy capable of generating basic employment.

Making matters worse, the Administration arrogantly denied the United Nations overall

authority for the reconstruction even though the U.N. had far more expertise and experience in nation building.

The looting and anarchy, the persistent insurgent attacks, the lack of real progress in restoring basic services, and the failure to find the promised weapons of mass destruction undercut the Administration's claim that things were going well in Iraq and led it to make the next set of serious blunders, which was the disbanding of the Iraqi military and security services.

Mr. Speaker, counterinsurgency experts will tell you that to pacify an occupied country it is essential to disarm, demobilize, and retrain (DDR) the local army. The idea behind a DDR program is to entice, cajole, or even coerce soldiers back to their own barracks or to other facilities where they can be fed, clothed, watched, retrained, and prevented from joining an insurgency movement, organized crime, or an outlaw militia.

By disbanding the military and security services without a DDR program, as many as one million Iraqi men were set at large with no money, no means to support their families, and no skills other than how to use a gun. Not surprisingly, many of these humiliated Sunni officers went home and joined the burgeoning Sunni insurgency.

The next major mistake made in the summer of 2003 was the decision to create an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which laid the foundation for many of Iraq's current political woes. Many of the IGC leaders were horribly corrupt, and they stole from the public treasury and encouraged their subordinates to do the same. The IGC set the tone for later Iraqi governments, particularly the transitional governments of Ayad Allawi and Ibrahim Jaafari that followed.

Finally, by insisting that all of the problems of the country were caused by the insurgency rather than recognizing the problems of the country were helping to fuel the insurgency, the Bush administration set about concentrating its efforts in all the wrong places and on the wrong problems.

This explains why for nearly all of 2004 and 2005, our troops were disproportionately deployed in the Sunni triangle trying to catch and kill insurgents. Although our troops caught and killed insurgents by the hundreds and thousands, these missions were not significantly advancing our strategic objectives. Indeed, they had little long-term impact because insurgents are always willing to flee temporarily rather than fight a leviathan. Second, because so many coalition forces were playing "whack-a-mole" with insurgents in the sparsely populated areas of western Iraq, the rest of the country was left vulnerable to take-over by militias.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a cruel irony is that because the Iraqi Government brought exiles and militia leaders into the government and gave them positions of power, it is now virtually impossible to get them out, and even more difficult to convince them to make compromises because the militia leaders have learned they can use their government positions to maintain and expand their personal power, at the expense both of their rivals who are not in the government and of the central government itself.

All of this was avoidable and the blame for the lack of foresight falls squarely on the White House and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Mr. Speaker, the American people spoke loudly and clearly last November when they tossed out the Rubber-Stamp Republican Congress. They voted for a New Direction in Iraq and for change in America. They voted to disentangle American troops from the carnage, chaos, and civil war in Iraq. They voted for accountability and oversight, which we Democrats have begun to deliver on; already the new majority has held more than 100 congressional hearings related to the Iraq War, investigating everything from the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse of Iraq reconstruction funding to troop readiness to the Iraq Study Group Report to the shameful mistreatment of wounded soldiers recuperating at Walter Reed Medical Center.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act provides real benchmarks and consequences if the Iraqi Government fails to live up to its commitments. First, it requires the President to certify and report to Congress on July 1, 2007 that real progress is underway on key benchmarks for the Iraqi government. If the President cannot so certify, redeployment of U.S. troops must begin immediately and be completed within 180 days. If the President fails to certify that Iraq has met the benchmarks on October 1, 2007, a redeployment of U.S. troops would begin immediately at that time and must be completed within 180 days. In any case, at the latest, a redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq must begin by March 1, 2008, and must be completed by August 31, 2008.

Since the benchmarks the Iraqi Government must meet are those established pursuant to President Bush's policies, it is passing strange indeed that he would threaten to veto the bill since it necessarily means he would veto his own benchmarks for the performance of the Iraqi government. He would veto his own readiness standards for U.S. troops. The President demands this Congress send him an Iraq war bill with "no strings." But the only "strings" attached, Mr. Speaker, are the benchmarks and standards imposed by the President himself.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the enormous financial cost, the human cost to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces has also been high but they have willingly paid it. Operation Iraqi Freedom has exacerbated the Veterans' Administration health care facility maintenance backlog; placed an undue strain on the delivery of medical treatment and rehabilitative services for current and new veterans; and exacted a heavy toll on the equipment, training and readiness requirements, and the families of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

The emergency supplemental acknowledges the sacrifices made by, and the debt of gratitude, we and the Iraqi people owe to Armed Forces of the United States. But more than that, it makes a substantial down payment on that debt by providing substantial increases in funding for our troops.

The supplemental includes a total appropriation of \$2.8 billion for Defense Health Care, which is \$1.7 billion above the President's request. The additional funding supports new initiatives to enhance medical services for active-duty forces and mobilized personnel, and their family members. Included in this new funding is \$450 million for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder/Counseling; \$450 million for Traumatic

Brain Injury care and research; \$730 million to prevent health care fee increases for our troops; \$20 million to address the problems at Walter Reed; and \$14.8 million for burn care.

Unlike the Republican leadership of the 109th Congress and the Bush administration, the new Democratic majority is committed to America's veterans. What's more, we back up that commitment by investing in their well-being. For example, the bill includes \$1.7 billion above the President's request for initiatives to address the health care needs of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and the backlog in maintaining VA health care facilities, including \$550 million to address the backlog in maintaining VA health care facilities so as to prevent the VA from experiencing a situation similar to that found at Walter Reed Medical Center.

The bill includes an additional \$250 million for medical administration to ensure there are sufficient personnel to support the growing number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and to maintain a high level of services for all veterans; \$229 million for treating the growing number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans; \$100 million for contract mental health care, which will allow the VA to contract with private mental health care providers to ensure that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are seen in the most timely and least disruptive fashion, including members of the Guard and Reserve; and \$62 million to speed up the processing of claims of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, when American troops are sent into harm's way, America has an obligation to do all it can to minimize the risk of harm to the troops. That is why I am pleased the supplemental includes additional funding above the President's request to support our troops. We are providing \$2.5 billion more to address the current readiness crisis of our stateside troops, including ensuring that they are better equipped and trained. We include \$1.4 billion more for military housing allowances and \$311 million more for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles for troops in Iraq. And there is included in the supplemental \$222 million more for infrared countermeasures for Air Force aircraft to address the growing threat against U.S. air operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Equally important, Mr. Speaker, the supplemental contains language directing the President to adhere to current military guidelines for unit readiness, deployments, and time between deployments.

The supplemental requires the Defense Department to abide by its current Unit Readiness policy, requiring the chief of the military department concerned to determine that a unit is "fully mission capable" before it is deployed to Iraq. The President may waive this provision by submitting a report to Congress detailing why the unit's deployment is in the interests of national security despite the assessment that the unit is not fully mission capable.

The Defense Department is also required to abide by its current policy and avoid extending the deployment of units in Iraq in excess of 365 days for the Army and 210 days for the Marines. The provision may be waived by the President only by submitting a report to Congress detailing the particular reason or reasons why the unit's extended deployment is in the interests of national security.

Mr. Speaker, to reduce the incidence of combat fatigue and enhance readiness, it is

important that our troops have sufficient time out of the combat zone and training between deployments. The supplemental requires the Defense Department to abide by its current policy and avoid sending units back into Iraq before troops get the required time away from the war theater. The President may waive this provision by submitting a report to Congress detailing why the unit's early redeployment to Iraq is in the interests of national security.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that the cost of the war in Iraq to the United States has also been high regarding the new and neglected needs of the American people. Americans have been exceedingly tolerant and patient with this Administration's handling of the situation in Iraq. We have postponed, foregone, or neglected needed investments in education, infrastructure, housing, homeland security.

That is why I am very pleased that the supplemental includes the following \$4.3 billion for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster recovery grants, including \$910 million to cover the cost of waiving the matching fund requirements in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5174 (Public Law 93-288) (Stafford Act) for state and local government meaning the Federal government will finance 100 percent of the grants.

Waiving the Stafford Act's matching fund requirement is critically important to the Gulf Coast states devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Based on my multiple listening trips to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, and my numerous meetings and discussions with government officials at all levels in the affected states and with survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many of whom now are relocated to my Houston congressional district, the most important lesson I have learned is that the Stafford Act is in its present form is simply inadequate to address the scale of devastation and human suffering wrought by a disaster the magnitude of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. I thank Mr. OBEY and Mr. MURTHA for responding to concerns I expressed to President Bush about the need to modernize the Stafford Act so that it remains relevant to the 21st Century.

I believe the Stafford Act must be amended to grant the federal government explicit authority and flexibility to provide long-term recovery assistance to communities devastated by disasters of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina and Rita. Such authority currently does not exist and the Stafford Act's emphasis on temporary assistance to affected individuals and communities is simply inadequate to address the scope of human suffering we witnessed last August and which is still with us today. I will continue my efforts to modernize the Stafford Act. But I very strongly approve of the nearly \$1 billion included in the bill to waive the matching fund requirements for hard-pressed state and local governments coping with emergencies of the scale of Hurricane Katrina.

Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding has been extended to September 30, 2010. SSBG funding provides critically needed social services, including programs for mental health, child welfare, and the treatment of addictive disorders.

Also allocated is \$1.3 billion for east and west bank levee protection and coastal restoration systems in New Orleans and surrounding parishes.

There is included \$25 million for Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans and \$80 million for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) tenant-based rental assistance. The supplemental also adds \$400 million to restore partial cuts to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). This funding will bring much needed relief to many States that are running out of LIHEAP funds just as many utility shut-off moratoriums are set to expire.

The supplemental adds \$750 million to the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to ensure continued healthcare coverage for children in 14 States that face a budget shortfall in the program. By taking prompt action now, these States will not be forced to stop enrolling new beneficiaries or begin curtailing benefits.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the supplemental provides \$30 million for K-12 education recruitment assistance; \$30 million for higher education assistance; and \$40 million in security assistance for Liberia. It also includes an additional \$1 billion to purchase vaccines needed to protect Americans from a global pandemic. Development of production capacity for a pandemic vaccine must be accelerated so that manufacturers can quickly produce enough quantities to protect the population.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me say that although the bill may not be the best I might have hoped for, I have concluded that it is the best that can be achieved at this time, this moment in history. I support the bill because I believe it represents a change of course and a new direction in our policy on Iraq. This bill will place us on the road that will reunite our troops with their families and bring them home with honor and success.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before is not asking us to expand or extend the war in Iraq. I would not and will not do that. On the contrary, this bill offers us the first real chance to vote to end the war. This bill puts us on the glide path to the day when our troops come home where we can "care for him who has borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan." This bill helps to repair the damage to America's international reputation and prestige. This bill brings long overdue oversight, accountability, and transparency to defense and reconstruction contracting and procurement.

Most important, Mr. Speaker, this bill offers us the first real chance to vote to end the war. We should take advantage of this opportunity. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1591, the "U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act."

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act. Today, Madam Speaker, we have a chance to take our country in a new direction to bring coherence and accountability to America's Iraq war policy.

As we enter our fifth year in the Iraq war, Americans have paid a high price for our involvement. Over 3,200 U.S. troops have died, approximately 25,000 U.S. troops have been wounded, and President Bush has squandered more than \$350 billion of taxpayer dollars with his misadventure. Our troops have been fighting and dying in Iraq longer than American soldiers did in World War II, World War I, the Korean war, or the Civil War. This important legislation imposes long overdue accountability on the administration's war policy

and will bring an end to President Bush's commitment to an open-ended war.

Specifically, the benchmarks and timelines contained in this legislation will hold both the president and the Iraqi Government accountable in how they conduct the war and the transition to a self-sufficient, democratic Iraq. This bill has taken into account both the administration's and experts' advice on how to proceed in Iraq. Many of the benchmarks are similar to provisions that President Bush has publicly supported. The bipartisan Iraq Study Group recommended many of the goals and target dates in H.R. 1591.

Importantly, this bill protects our troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan and the troops and veterans returning home. H.R. 1591 provides sufficient funding to ensure that our troops have the equipment to protect themselves from harm while they defend many of the innocent citizens of Iraq. We should all agree that never again will America send its troops into battle without the best equipment to accomplish their mission.

For our troops returning home, this legislation reverses years of neglect and moves us toward a comprehensive effort to address their needs. There is an extra \$1.7 billion for military health care to be spent on military hospitals and a provision that prevents the closing of Walter Reed hospital—the first stop for so many of our wounded troops returning home. The bill also appropriates \$1.7 billion additional funding for veterans' health care, \$2.5 billion for improving the readiness of our state-side troops and \$1.4 billion more for military housing allowances.

Mr. Speaker, when an Iraqi Shiite soldier is ready to defend an Iraqi Sunni civilian and an Iraqi Sunni soldier is ready to defend an Iraqi Shiite civilian, then perhaps we will know that the people of Iraq are ready to live in peace with security. But until such time, our troops have no business sitting in the crosshairs of a bloody civil war. By creating benchmarks and timelines for U.S. troop involvement in Iraq, this bill sends a message to Iraqis that they need to resolve their conflicts at the negotiation table and not through violence. We can help, but they must first prove that they are willing and prepared to help themselves.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1591 and start the process of bringing our troops home. Our men and women in uniform have done all we have asked of them. They won the war against Saddam Hussein and fought valiantly and timelessly to secure the peace in Iraq. Now, it is time for us to do our job: remove our soldiers from the insanity of the Iraq civil war and return them home. Only then can we rededicate ourselves and refocus our efforts to fight against the threat of terrorism.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the legislation before the House, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act. This measure supports our troops in the field. It provides more resources to ensure that our wounded service members and veterans receive the health care and support they need. And it sets a responsible timeline for the phased redeployment of our troops.

Our Nation continues to pay a high price for the administration's reckless invasion of Iraq and the President's open-ended commitment of U.S. military forces in that country. Our troops are entering their fifth year in Iraq, and there is no end in sight. The situation is deteriorating. Iraq is descending into a civil war.

For the last 4 years, the former Republican majority in the Congress sat on its hands and followed the President's policy like robots. The American people elected a new majority in the House and Senate so that Congress would stand up and stop being a rubber stamp for the President.

The President's open-ended policies of committing U.S. troops in Iraq for as long as it takes is not working. We need a new way forward. The only chance to salvage the situation in Iraq is to put real pressure on the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future.

Last January 10, President Bush addressed the Nation and admitted that the situation in Iraq was descending into a vicious cycle of sectarian violence. He laid out a series of actions that the Iraqi Government would have to take; benchmarks that the Iraqis would have to follow through on or lose the support of the American people. The President said that Iraq would approve legislation to share oil revenue among the Iraq people; that Iraq would spend \$10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects; that Iraq would reform the laws governing de-Baathification and allow more Iraqis to re-enter their nation's political life; that Iraq would establish a fair process for considering amendments to Iraq's constitution; and that Iraq would set a schedule to conduct provincial and local elections. The President said, "America will hold the Iraqi Government to the benchmarks it has announced."

Since President Bush made that speech two months ago, 217 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq. More than 3,200 American soldiers have died since the war began. More than 23,000 have been wounded. Until the Iraqis step up to the plate and make the difficult political decisions that need to be made, the sectarian violence will continue and American military men and women will continue to be killed and wounded. Either the factions in Iraq are going to come together and make these decisions, or they are not. We should not leave our troops in harm's way indefinitely and just hand the President another blank check to continue an open-ended policy with no end in sight.

The legislation before the House supports the troops, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. It holds the Iraqi Government to the benchmarks for progress that the President outlined in his January 10 speech. Under this bill, if the President cannot certify that Iraq has achieved these benchmarks by October 1 of this year, a redeployment of U.S. troops begins immediately and must be completed within 180 days. Absent this pressure, the Iraqi Government will continue to postpone action on achieving the benchmarks. If the Iraqi Government does, indeed, meet the benchmarks by October 1, redeployment of U.S. forces would begin next March and be completed within 180 days.

After more than 4 years, this legislation would end the open-ended commitment to this war. It would set a clear timeline for the phased redeployment of U.S. troops. Without this pressure, there is little chance that the Iraqi leaders will make the decisions necessary to end civil war and build one nation. Our country cannot make these decisions for them. I urge passage of this legislation by the House.

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readi-

ness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act, which sends the message to the Iraqis that we will not commit open-endedly our blood and tax dollars if they are not willing to step up and take control of their own country.

We have lost more than 3,200 of our best men and women over the last 4 years and 4 days we have been in Iraq, and more than 24,000 others have come home wounded. We are spending about \$200,000 a minute in Iraq. The Iraqi people need to know that we will not continue to do all the work if they are unable or unwilling to put aside their religious differences and come together to build a civil society.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that this legislation has been mischaracterized as a timeline on our troops. The true intention of this measure, as I see it, is to put a timeline on the Iraqi people to meet the benchmarks that have already been established by the President. The bill we will vote on today will not withhold a single dollar from our men and women on the ground in Iraq, and it will not tie our commanders' hands but simply holds the Iraqis accountable for taking command of their own country.

As chairman of the U.S. delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, I have talked at length with our allies who are helping us fight the war on terror in Afghanistan, where we are in a very critical year, with the Taliban planning a new series of attacks on U.S. and NATO troops there. I fear we are threatening our work on that very important effort if we continue to focus most of our resources to a deteriorating sectarian conflict that General Petraeus has said cannot be won with military might alone if there is not timely political and diplomatic progress.

I served 4 years in the United States Navy and 26 years in the Tennessee Army National Guard. During that time, it was my duty to carry out the orders handed me by the civilian leadership. Now that you and our colleagues and I are part of that civilian leadership, it is our responsibility to help shape military policy and hold the civilian leadership at the Pentagon and elsewhere accountable for the way they have managed—or mismanaged—operations in Iraq.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I am not willing to keep asking our military families and the American taxpayers to commit their lives and tax dollars forever. The only alternative to this bill is an open-ended bleeding of our blood and tax dollars with no end in sight and no pressure on the Iraqi government to make the changes necessary.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007.

It is time for a new direction in Iraq. We cannot continue to ask our troops to baby-sit a civil war. With our help, the Iraqis have established a coalition government, and we have trained more than 250,000 Iraqi security forces. We must now send a message to them that the patience of the American people is not endless, and that the Iraqi people must take control of their future by making the tough political compromises essential to living in peace. In short, it is time to take the training wheels off.

The bill before us today achieves the goal of redeployment of U.S. forces by setting specific benchmarks of progress using for the Iraqis and President's own benchmarks for success. If these benchmarks cannot be met, then the

bill provides for a systematic approach for withdrawal of our troops.

Although I have had concerns about setting a date certain for withdrawal, a responsible timeline will work to hold the Iraqi Government accountable for much-needed and overdue progress. Essentially, this is a timeline on the Iraqis to come together and take control of their country.

The proposals included in this bill are truly a new direction, rather than just more of the same. By calling for a responsible, phased redeployment of our troops out of Iraq, this bill allows us to re-focus our military efforts in Afghanistan.

I am increasingly concerned that the main threat against the United States, al Qaeda, is still a global threat with global reach, and that the person who was directly responsible for 9/11, Osama Bin Laden, is still at large. The President has taken his eye off the ball in Afghanistan and is not doing everything in his power to bring those responsible for 9/11 to justice. It sends a terrible message to would-be terrorists who may be interested in striking us that all they have to do is go in hiding and lie low until we get distracted on another adventure. I am hopeful that this supplemental appropriations bill sends a signal to the President that he needs to reassess his priorities.

Our men and women in the Armed Forces are to be commended for the terrific job they do for us across the globe each and every day, often in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. They deserve a clearer mission, they deserve to have the training and equipment they need to complete that mission, and they deserve the best care when they return home with physical and emotional wounds. The supplemental provides for all these needs.

During my three visits to Iraq, I met with our military command, troops in the field, and numerous Iraqi leaders and civilians. I can honestly say that nothing has made me prouder to be an American than seeing the performance of our troops in the field. They are well-trained, well-motivated and an inspiration to us all. They are, in short, the best America has to offer.

In particular, active military, Guard, and Reserve forces from western Wisconsin have answered the call to service. I have been to many deployment ceremonies and witnessed the anguish in the hearts and faces of family and friends as they say goodbye to their loved ones being sent abroad for lengthy stays. I have also been to several welcome home ceremonies to honor their service and to thank them for their sacrifice.

Sadly, I have also had 18 military funerals in my congressional district alone, most of which I have personally attended. If I don't have to attend another military funeral, if I don't have to pick up the phone to call another grieving family, I will be one of the happiest people in the world. They are a constant reminder of the human toll this war is having, not only with our troops but also with their families and our communities. There is not a day that goes by when I am not concerned about the safety and welfare of our troops.

A new direction, not an escalation, is what is needed in Iraq. We have now been in Iraq longer than the entire Second World War. The supplemental provides that new direction—one where the Iraqis assume responsibility for their future, and the U.S. starts to redeploy our

troops and strengthen our military that is stretched too thin and on the verge of breaking. "More of the same," or "staying the course," is not an option.

Once again I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks and undying admiration for our men and women in uniform for their service to our country. May God bless them and their families during this difficult time. May God provide his special blessings and care for those who fell in the line of duty. And may God continue to bless these United States of America.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the Democrats' so-called emergency supplemental. This cynical bill uses our troops as a political bargaining chip for additional billions in unrelated, pork barrel spending, which has nothing to do with winning the global war on terrorism. This bill has become a Christmas tree of pork.

I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, what does \$25 million for spinach growers, \$74 million for peanut storage, and \$50 for the Capitol Power Plant have to do with winning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the list of unrelated spending goes on longer than I have time.

Spinach producers and peanut farmers may very well need and deserve the money. And I am sure the Capitol Power Plant needs improvements, but why in this bill? Why is this money not being considered through regular order or subjected to normal budgetary rules, like PAYGO? And most importantly, why at the expense of our troops?

This important spending bill is being used as a vehicle to micromanage the war and score political points. Our troops deserve better. We need to focus on getting the equipment to our troops on the front lines and get away from political posturing.

However, this bill is not about the troops. It is about politics. It is about tying the hands of the commander-in-chief because some in this body do not agree with his policies.

People on both sides of the aisle can certainly agree that mistakes have been made in Iraq and a change of strategy is long overdue. However, what should this change of strategy be? Should the U.S. immediately pull out of Iraq, leave the terrorists emboldened and potentially put more Americans at risk? Or do we need a new strategy to win the war and finish the job?

While no proposal guarantees success, a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. support would guarantee failure. The stakes are too high to fail in Iraq. It remains in America's strategic interests to ensure regional stability in the Middle East and to deny terrorists a safe haven in Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill. Furthermore, I hope that the House leadership will bring up a clean bill that focuses solely on supporting our troops and not one filled up with pork and unrelated spending.

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I will vote today for a resolution that would finally draw the war in Iraq to a close, and that would for the first time put conditions of self-determination on the Iraqi government that has benefited from our country's generosity. While I was not yet in Congress at the time of the original authorization debate in 2002, I have concluded that the authorization decision was wrong and that too many American lives have been sacrificed for the dubious cause of ad-

vancing the interests of one side of an Iraqi civil war over the other.

It is also my belief that Congress has the unmistakable authority to put time limits on the commitment of American forces and to attach strings to the manner in which military funds are spent: Congress has used this power before in Lebanon, Vietnam, and Somalia, and most recently, during the second term of the Clinton Administration, when Republican congressional majorities imposed restrictions on the use of ground forces and on the duration of the force commitment made during the Balkan conflict.

Some of my colleagues who share my opposition to the war have suggested that this resolution has the defect of not going far enough in that it does not require an immediate withdrawal of American forces. I disagree: for the sake of regional stability, any withdrawal should be more orderly and more measured than the haphazard way American forces were deployed in the first place.

Other anti-war critics argue that a Democratic Congress has a moral imperative to take a bolder course, such as repeal of the 2002 authorization or a pledge to impound funding for additional deployments. While I agree that the test of Democratic legislation cannot be whether it would attract a Presidential veto (if that is the standard, Democrats would be immobilized this next 2 years), it is reasonable for the Democratic leadership to pursue a bill that can win overwhelming Democratic support, including those members from more conservative districts whose opposition to the war comes at some political cost.

Finally, I respect the concern of some Alabamians that any withdrawal from Iraq is a loss of prestige that will embolden our enemies. While this is not a trivial argument, the reality is that radical Islamic fundamentalism has exploded into a civil war in Iraq and that Al Qaeda will be a generation-long threat. These conflicts will rage on regardless of whether we are in combat in Iraq because they are rooted not in an assessment of our strength but in a permanent disdain for our values.

We need to engage Islamic terrorism on a different ground, such as Afghanistan, where Al Qaeda is resurgent, and we should use the leverage from a withdrawal from Iraq to cement international resistance to the Iranian nuclear program. Lines should be drawn in the sand around Israel's security, and the steady work of cultivating Arab moderates and isolating Arab radicals should continue. But it is time to end our active engagement in the disaster that is Iraq.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, simply put, I strongly oppose this war and have done so since its inception.

I stand ready to do whatever needs to be done to bring this conflict to a responsible end—and I have been working toward that goal since the first day I stepped onto this floor.

As a Progressive, my first inclination was to vote against this supplemental.

I still believe it's important to loudly proclaim that this war should end, but I've come to the conclusion that a vote against this bill is not the most effective way to make that statement.

Even though this supplemental does not push for an immediate end, it is our best hope in the Progressive struggle to bring our troops home and finally allow the Iraqis to determine their own future.

I am also strongly supportive of the funds provided in this bill to fund the S-CHIP shortfall.

Georgia's PeachCare program needs immediate relief and this bill will ensure children in need in my state continue to receive the health insurance we promised them, at least for the short term.

Make no mistake, I do not consider this bill to be the final statement on the war in Iraq—or the PeachCare program for that matter. But it is a good start and I will support it today.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I want to voice my support for this supplemental, not because I agree with everything in it, but because I agree with the most important thing in it: a binding deadline to redeploy our troops from Iraq.

We need to redeploy our troops from Iraq, first and foremost, because it is in our national security interest.

As someone who voted for the original resolution, I am particularly pained by the suffering of the thousands of our servicemembers killed and tens of thousands wounded. I'm glad this bill begins to put the appropriate resources into caring for those coming home with traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, and beginning to fix the problems at Walter Reed Medical Center and other facilities. It is outrageous that this Administration has allowed our uniformed men and women to be treated so shabbily.

I also have enormous sympathy for the families of servicemembers killed and injured in Iraq. I agonize about those on the home front who worry every day about getting that horrible visit, and who struggle to raise children, pay bills, and lead some semblance of normal life with family members in a combat zone. I want our troops to come home.

Yet the hardships they and their families endure are not the reason to bring our troops home. I know that the men and women in uniform, and the families behind them, are willing to make the sacrifices they do if that is what it takes to make America more secure.

But the truth is, this war is not making us more secure.

By manipulating the intelligence and rushing to war, ignoring our allies, grossly mismanaging the occupation, and basing this entire war on ideology and hope rather than expertise and pragmatism, the Administration has torn our national security fabric.

Staying in Iraq, policing their civil war, does not bring us closer to defeating the global network of extremists who wish to harm us. To the contrary, in order to improve national security and best address our other strategic interests around the world and here at home, we must dramatically change our current direction in Iraq.

Redeployment from Iraq will enhance our security by allowing us to properly address other potential challenges around the world, from Afghanistan, North Korea, and Iran to the Western Pacific, the Horn of Africa, and the greater Middle East. In particular, it will allow us to put our attention back on Afghanistan and Pakistan and the fight against a resurgent al Qaeda and Taliban, the enemies who actually engineered 9/11.

Bringing troops home also allows us to resolve the concerns about the readiness of our Armed Forces, which have been strained to the breaking point because of this Administration's careless management of the war in Iraq.

Perhaps most importantly, only by extricating ourselves from the mess of Iraq can we begin moving our country back to a common-sense policy of strength through leadership. Every day our military is in Iraq our standing in the international community erodes further.

Already we've seen respect for the United States plunge from record highs after 9/11 to record lows now. This loss of moral authority compromises our ability to lead multinational efforts to fight national security threats from terrorism and nuclear proliferation to global wanning and drug trafficking.

We cannot begin rebuilding our international credibility and leadership until we have redeployed from Iraq. We cannot restore the flexibility to meet the real, potentially existential threats of nuclear terrorism that were used to justify the invasion of Iraq until we exit Iraq.

We hear dire warnings about the awful results if we leave Iraq. It is true that bad things may happen when our Armed Forces leave if the Iraqis cannot or will not choose reconciliation over conflict. But that will be true if we leave at the end of this year, the end of next year, or in 2015. Delaying redeployment only delays the Iraqis' moment of responsibility.

The sooner we begin redeployment, the sooner we begin unraveling the tremendous damage that this war and its mismanagement have wrought on our national security. Given the Administration's history of manipulation and deceit, the interim deadlines of December 2007 and March 2008 may not prove binding, since the President can make certifications that waive those deadlines. I will support this supplemental, however, because it does set a binding deadline on withdrawal no later than August of next year. I would like the deadline to be sooner, but most important is that we bring finality to this war.

Our men and women in uniform have served our country courageously and performed brilliantly—just as they always do. But asking them to stand between warring factions is not only unfair, it's counterproductive.

I believe in a strong U.S. engagement around the world, including using military force when necessary. I also believe, as did Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan, that America's greatest strength comes from its values and its ability to lead. We need to restore America's leadership. We need to strengthen America's security. We need to pass this supplemental and begin the redeployment from Iraq.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591. This is not an Emergency War Supplemental; it is the Partisan Repayment Act. Indeed, this legislation is less about supplying the troops than feeding the base.

There is desperate need for a new Iraq policy, and we should be using this opportunity to have a serious discussion. It is unseemly, even embarrassing, to use pork to buy support for bad policy on a bill as important as this one. It makes us look as trifling and greedy as our enemies claim. The well-being of our men and women in uniform is in the balance, as is the future of the Middle East. If ever there was a time to win on the strength of one's ideas, this is it.

I share the concerns of my colleagues regarding the progress of the war, and I believe there is value in setting benchmarks. Ours should not be an open-ended, unquestioning commitment to the Iraqis. They do need to as-

sume more responsibility for their own affairs. It is not the job of our troops to referee partisan quarrels, nor is it our job to baby-sit the Iraqi government.

It is foolish, however, to make such milestones public. It is even more foolish to announce a date for withdrawal. Doing so gives the enemy too much information and too many options.

It is also foolish to codify deadlines. Who's to say the Iraqi government won't make a good faith effort to accomplish the tasks required of them? It would be wise to allow them flexibility, not give them a drop-dead date. We ourselves are working under a continuing resolution because we could not pass more than two appropriations bills last year. Our 5-day workweeks are often 4 days long—who are we to set a deadline in statute?

There is a pressing need to formulate a new policy for Iraq. I am disappointed the Democrats have yet to allow a serious debate on this, the most important issue facing the Congress today. Rather, we have wasted time with a non-binding resolution regarding tactics—not even strategy. Now we send the Iraqis a laundry list of errands and a pre-determined result.

Success in Iraq will require a broad based policy shift. The Iraq Study Group report includes 79 recommendations covering all facets of public policy—military, diplomatic, economic, and social. This report should form the basis of a productive discussion. Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership has opted for a hodge-podge of sound bites masquerading as serious legislation. They have stifled debate rather than encouraged it by refusing to allow any amendments.

Mr. Speaker, this is but the first act in the play. Our own servicemen and women do need the funding this bill would provide. I am confident once we get beyond this charade we will be able to craft responsible legislation to give it to them.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, we began this week by solemnly marking the fourth anniversary of the war in Iraq, the more than 3,200 brave soldiers who have been killed there, and the 378 billion dollars that have been appropriated thus far. But we end the week with the historic opportunity to bring about an end to this catastrophe.

Over the last 4 years, the President not only failed to provide a plan to win in Iraq, he failed to offer our troops concrete and attainable objectives. Where he has let down our forces and the American people, Congress has a Constitutional obligation to step in, and this, "The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act," is our chance. It is our only real chance, to see this war end, to comply with the stated will of the American people, and to bring our troops home.

It is important to remember that this bill does more than set benchmarks and a timeline; it also provides much needed funding to protect our troops abroad and care for our veterans at home. A vote against this bill is a vote for the President but against our soldiers; it supports the war but abandons our young men and women in uniform.

That being said, whether we authorize it or not, the President will find the funding to prolong this war, even if it is at the expense of our soldiers, our veterans, and other crucial programs. This country cannot afford another Walter Reed, nor can it afford to send the

President another blank check to indefinitely extend this occupation.

The President has asked for a bill without strings attached. He doesn't deserve a bill without strings. In 4 years of acting without strings, this war has never had an end in sight. We have before us today the opportunity to bring finality into view, and I urge my colleagues, members of the Senate, and President Bush not to squander this opportunity. I ask that we unite in support of Iraqi independence, U.S. troops, and H.R. 1591.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, 4 years that have been difficult for our country, we have had to watch the administration bungle the war in Iraq in just about every way imaginable. As war became civil war in Iraq, we watched our colleagues on the other side of the aisle act as a rubber stamp for this misguided war while refusing to ask the pertinent questions, the questions we were asking, the questions the American people were asking. And we watched as 3,200 of our brave troops lost their lives in another country's civil war, while 24,000 came home with permanent injuries and billions upon billions of our taxpayers' dollars have been sunk into the quicksand Iraq has become.

This will be the case no more.

With the scores of oversight hearings our leadership has already conducted this year and now with this legislation, we are, for the first time, bringing accountability, timelines and end to the mismanaged war in Iraq.

Congress is no longer a rubber stamp.

The President has asked us time and again for money for this war without any strings. This, despite the fact that they let many of our troops go to battle without the proper equipment, and that they can't even account for \$12 billion of taxpayer money for reconstruction.

With this bill, we will bring accountability as well as money for our injured soldiers who have been neglected. We are adding a total of \$3.4 billion for the military health care system, including money to address the problems at Walter Reed and money for head injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder.

For 4 years, the administration's war policies have been risking lives and spending this country's treasure without any accountability.

This legislation will end the free ride and it will end the war.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, but with some reservations. While I appreciate the care with which Speaker PELOSI, Chairman OBEY and the Democratic leadership have approached this supplemental appropriations bill, we are left, as we often are, with a flawed product. But I do believe, in regard to Iraq, that it is the best we are able to do right now.

The legislation for the first time establishes performance benchmarks for the Iraqi military and government, and firmly states that it is time to bring the troops home sooner rather than later. I did not vote to authorize the Iraq war, and I do not support President Bush's troop surge, but if this bill does not pass we will be forced to pass a funding bill that does not have these benchmarks, and that would be nothing more than the status quo, which is a blank check for President Bush. I say again, I do not support everything in this legislation, but it is the best alternative available to us at the present time.

I am particularly troubled by the non-military and non-veteran spending in this bill. While I

support more funding for some of the important needs addressed here, particularly domestic spending priorities that have been severely neglected by the Bush administration over the last 6 years, they would be better considered elsewhere. The bill does address serious deficiencies in our veterans' health care system, and I whole-heartedly support this funding. We have a great deal more work to do to ensure that the brave men and women who defend this country are fully supported upon their return home, but this is a good start.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, like the war itself, presents us with tough choices. I will support the bill, and by doing so send a signal that it is time for the Iraqis to also make tough political decisions and take control of their own destiny. My thoughts and prayers are with our troops and their families, and I will continue to work for their speedy return.

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act. I concede that the legislation we are voting on today is by no means perfect, but I do believe it is a step in the right direction and deserves the support of those Americans who want to bring this misguided and mismanaged war to a responsible and timely conclusion.

In an ideal world, we would bring our troops home today, but that doesn't match the reality of our struggle in Iraq. We have an even smaller chance of accomplishing that goal in the Senate. The bill before us represents the best opportunity to affect the conduct of this war.

The benchmarks established within the supplemental are the same as those proposed by the President in January, the Iraq Study Group, and endorsed by Iraqi leaders. They include real consequences for the Iraqi government and a definite timeline for a phased and deliberate redeployment of American combat forces from Iraq by no later than August 2008. The bill provides what is currently missing in the President's policies—a plan to redeploy our troops from a situation that cannot be improved by their continued presence.

It's unmistakable that our presence in Iraq has weakened our Armed Forces and jeopardized our standing in the world. It has also diverted valuable resources away from fighting al Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America. The supplemental not only provides a new direction in Iraq, but also redirects resources to fight the real global war on terrorism.

To all of those who argue that passage of this legislation would mean conceding defeat to the terrorists, I would say both that they are wrong, and that the alternative they endorse is unacceptable. For what they propose is simply "stay the course," more of the same—more deaths, more life altering injuries, more destruction, more squandered opportunity, more debt, and more diminished standing in the world. This legislation is about sending a message to the President that he cannot pursue the same failed strategy of the past 4 years and receive a blank check from this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to this war. I believe the decision to invade Iraq is the single most devastating and misguided foreign policy decision our Nation has ever made. I will vote for the supplemental because I believe it is the best course available to us at this time to

bring our involvement in this misguided tragedy to an end.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act. This legislation would make emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007.

H.R. 1591 would provide funding for many purposes. This funding would support our military personnel who are fighting our country's enemies. This funding also would support our civilian personnel who are trying to establish a lasting peace for beleaguered citizens of some of the world's most troubled countries. Of particular note, this legislation includes much needed funding for healthcare for wounded warriors who have returned home, having given all but their lives in service to our country.

Debate with respect to this legislation will focus on the war in Iraq. Iraq is today's signature issue and it is also one of the most divisive and complex ones before this Congress. The choices we make regarding Iraq will establish a legacy for the United States that will define our policy toward the Middle East region for a generation or longer. For that reason, it is my hope that we, as an institution and, indeed, as a country can agree upon a policy that protects our national interests and those of our allies and supports those servicemembers and civilians—and their families—who so bravely serve our country today in Iraq and elsewhere around the world.

It is true the government of Iraq must work to better fulfill its obligation to govern from moderate positions, with uniformity, and with regard to the rule of law. On January 31, 2007, I introduced H.R. 744, the Iraq Policy Revitalization and Congressional Oversight Enhancement Act. H.R. 744 would take a different approach to the challenge of setting metrics to measure progress in Iraq and to define the terms for completion of the mission in that country than what is called for in H.R. 1591, the legislation that is currently before this body.

I am a member of the Committee on Armed Services and I have traveled to Iraq eight times since taking office in 2003. These trips have allowed me to observe our operations in Iraq and to personally speak with our commanders, servicemembers, and civilian personnel in the field. I have also had the opportunity to speak with Iraqi leaders during these visits. As a result, I have learned a great deal about the accomplishments made in Iraq to date. I have also learned of the many challenges that remain there.

I believe that an honest and open exchange of views on the substance of what our country and our allies must achieve in Iraq in order to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom is needed. Finding an achievable, expeditious, and honorable way to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom should be a primary goal for all of us. We owe this to those who have sacrificed so much for this mission. But the situation in Iraq will not yield a solution easily. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to find one. In doing so, we will be helping shape in the best way possible the legacy future generations of Americans will inherit and the one that we will have to defend to history. Like it or not, the United States assumed a moral obligation to bring order to Iraq when we, in a pre-emptive manner, attacked that country four years ago this month. History

will judge us harshly if we act in a way that would abandon this obligation.

It is for this reason and others that I strongly support the funding called for by this legislation that supports our wounded warriors who are embarking on their long but hopeful roads to recovery, that supports our servicemembers who continue to pursue our enemies worldwide, and that supports our civilian personnel who work to stabilize and reconstruct countries that are now home to disturbing violence and heartbreaking loss of life. I urge my colleagues to support the funding called for by this legislation.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, our country has just begun the fifth year of war in Iraq. By overwhelming numbers, the American people want a new direction and I believe this bill contains the policy and the plan to help bring an end to the misguided policies of the Administration.

Military leaders, Generals Abizaid, Odom and Powell, as well as former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, have all come forward to observe that the Administration's war-without-end policy is not a strategy for success.

Today's legislation directs itself to important change. It sets a new course for ending the war.

The bill requires accountability: It puts the Iraqis in charge of Iraq. If they cannot or will not bring their country under control, if conditions continue to worsen and political and military benchmarks are not met, beginning in July 2007 (less than four months from today), our troops will begin an immediate redeployment.

The bill begins a redeployment: It sets a firm timeline to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq and in legally-binding terms declares that all U.S. troops will be out of Iraq by August 31, 2008, if not sooner.

It requires the Iraqis—not our soldiers—to reign in the militias, aggressively pursue the insurgents and provide "evenhanded security for all Iraqis."

The bill prohibits the establishment of any permanent military bases. It bans the use of torture. It redirects resources back to the fight against terrorism and Al-Qaeda, and re-commits us to creating a stable state in Afghanistan.

The bill takes care of our troops. It provides over \$3 billion more than the President's request to meet the neglected needs of our returning soldiers and veterans around the country.

The following are quotes from respected national leaders:

Retired General William Odom, former Director of the National Security Agency under President Reagan and member of the National Security Council under President Carter stated recently: "Getting out of Iraq is the pre-condition for creating new strategic options."

According to former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski:

"The United States cannot afford an open-ended commitment to a war without end. A means must be devised to end the U.S. combat role in Iraq and reduce our troop levels, so that we can begin to rebuild our military and reclaim our position of leadership in the world. The bill the House will consider this week does that in an effective and responsible way."

Former NATO Commander Wesley Clark:

“The conflict must be resolved politically—military efforts alone are insufficient—and this legislation strongly promotes that political solution.”

Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this supplemental legislation. For the first time the debate about Iraq is not “if” or “how.” It is about “when” . . . when our troops will come home.

It is binding language.

It is sensible language.

It is language that will change the direction of the war.

It is language that will help to heal our wounded troops.

It is language that will help heal our Nation. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mrs. McCARTHY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today, I will vote in favor of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans’ Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007 to fully fund our troops and end the war in Iraq.

This legislation will fully fund the troops serving in Iraq. It is imperative that they have the necessary equipment to conduct their mission as safely and swiftly as possible.

Today’s vote marks a major shift in the strategy for Iraq by imposing real responsibility on the Iraqi government. President Bush outlined several benchmarks for the Iraqi government in his January 10 address. Unfortunately, there were no real consequences for the Iraqi government if these benchmarks were not met. Today’s vote put real pressure on Prime Minister Maliki and the Iraqi government to meet these benchmarks. If the Iraqis do not step up and take control of their own security, U.S. forces will begin a phased redeployment as early as July 1, 2007. All U.S. troops must begin their redeployment by March 1, 2008, by which time, the Iraqis will have had ample opportunity to be trained and take control of their situation.

The U.S. cannot remain in Iraq indefinitely. During the past 4 years, the U.S. has suffered over 3,000 casualties and countless injuries attempting to curb the violence in Iraq. The time has come for the Iraqis to stand up and make a real investment in the security and future of their nation.

I will continue to support our troops and ensure they are trained and properly equipped for battle. But the course in Iraq must be changed, and that change has begun today.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591, the so-called U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans’ Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007.

That’s what my Democratic colleagues are calling the bill. And while I support the funding in the bill for troop readiness and veterans’ health care, I wonder why the bill’s title ends with Iraq Accountability. Why not mention hand-outs to dairy interests, spinach farmers, citrus growers, or for storing peanuts? Yes, \$74 million for storing peanuts.

Why not mention the unrequested funding for fighting wildfires in the west, or the doubling of so-called “emergency” funds for the long-known and well planned Base Realignment and Closure effort—funding that the new majority knew was needed, but wouldn’t provide in the continuing resolution just last month? Why not mention the increase in the minimum wage or funding for asbestos abatement in the Capitol contained in this alleged emergency wartime supplemental appropriations bill?

“Clean” is not a word I would use to describe this bill, which includes more than \$21

billion in spending that is completely unrelated to troop readiness, veterans’ health, or Iraq. Sure, I’ve heard of Christmas in July, but Christmas in March? What happened to the other party’s promise to end business as usual? This bill is worse than usual. As the editorial in USA Today put it yesterday, “It’s hard to believe which is worse: leaders offering peanuts for a vote of this magnitude, or members allowing their votes to be bought for peanuts.”

Don’t get me wrong. I agree that Congress has a responsibility and an obligation to ensure the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense have the resources necessary to care for our veterans from all wars and our wounded soldiers returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

I agree that Congress has a responsibility and an obligation to see that American troops are ready and able to fulfill their mission. That’s why I am a cosponsor of a bill introduced by my distinguished and decorated colleague from Texas, Mr. JOHNSON. H.R. 511 pledges, “Congress will not cut off or restrict funding for units and members of the Armed Forces that the Commander in Chief has deployed in harm’s way” in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I also agree that we must do a better job holding the Iraqi government accountable. For too long, we pursued an open-ended commitment without well-defined goals and clear benchmarks for success.

That’s why I am a cosponsor of legislation, H.R. 1062, that will hold the Administration—and the Iraqi government—accountable in achieving clear benchmarks.

It requires the President to report to Congress, every 30 days, on the extent to which the Government of Iraq is moving forward on more than a dozen fronts, from troop training and security to rebuilding, reconciliation, international cooperation and enforcing the rule of law.

It also requires progress reports on the implementation of strategies that will prevent Iraqi territory from becoming a safe haven for terrorist activities.

But the bill we are considering today goes beyond funding and benchmarks and crosses a constitutional line that has long kept Congress from micromanaging military and foreign affairs.

Instead of sweeping away bureaucratic obstacles to success, this bill creates 435 new armchair generals.

Instead of giving General Petraeus and our diplomatic leaders the flexibility to fulfill their mission, it saddles them with bureaucratic requirements and arbitrary timetables.

Instead of ensuring that our troops in harm’s way have the resources and equipment they need, this bill uses our military men and women as pawns in a dangerous political game.

Instead of giving our troops, the Iraqi people, and their fledgling government one last chance, it gives them one last mandate—to retreat in defeat.

As if the bill wasn’t wasteful enough, it starts a perilous countdown to a vacuum in leadership and security that threatens any prospect for peace or stability in the Middle East for years to come. And it does a great disservice to our men and women in uniform and their commanders in the field who have already sacrificed so much for our freedom and security and that of the Iraqi people. They deserve better.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this irresponsible bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, we meet on what is the fourth day of the fifth year of the war in Iraq. It is a war that has gone on longer than the war in Korea. America has been fighting longer in Iraq than we did during World War II—even though that was an international conflict fought on two fronts against some of the most dangerous threats to our national security ever known.

Too many Members of this Congress and of this Administration have for years seen what they wanted to see in Iraq, and believed what they wanted to believe. But their conceptions couldn’t matter less to the men and women of that nation, or to the men and women of the American military who are fighting there.

Civilians and soldiers don’t live in the world as politicians say it is. They live in the world as it really is. And they live, every day, with the consequences of the decisions made here in this chamber.

During the first 4 years of the Iraq war, they had to live with an Administration and a Congress that either could not, or would not, see this conflict for what it really was: a war that was not being won, that was being fought by soldiers who often did not have the equipment they needed or the care they were owed, that was not improving the security of the Iraqi people, that was depleting our military and, as a result, endangering the long-term security of this nation, and that was based on a flawed strategy that desperately needed to be changed.

They lived with the former Secretary of Defense dismissing persistent equipment shortages by telling us that our nation had gone to war with the Army it had. By the time Mr. Rumsfeld had uttered those words, on December 9th, 2004, 1,288 U.S. soldiers had been killed.

They lived with predictions that the insurgency in Iraq was in its last throes, a statement made 6 months later. Four hundred thirty-seven more soldiers had lost their lives in those months.

And now, they live with more calls for patience from the Administration and its allies, and more denunciations of anyone who would seek a different course in Iraq.

As of today, more than 3,200 soldiers have died in this war. The civilian death toll is astonishing, with estimates now running as high as 1 million Iraqi men, women, and children killed as a direct or indirect result of the conflict and the chaos it has unleashed. Millions more have been dislocated, driven out of their homes and into refugee camps.

It is long past time for this institution to join with our soldiers and with the people of Iraq in seeing this war for what it really is.

The legislation before us today represents the first real chance Democrats have had since 2003 to change the course of the war in Iraq. And we intend to do it.

We will do it not because we are conceding anything to those who would do our Nation harm, not because we lack the will to continue the fight, and not because, as some would have you believe, we are giving up.

Instead, we are going to change the course of this war because the future of the people of Iraq hinges on it, because a basic level of respect for our soldiers demands it, and because the long-term security of our Nation depends on it.

Mr. Speaker, the simple reality is that the situation in Iraq is stagnant at best, and deteriorating at worst. Politically, economic and military goals are not being met there. Faced with such truths, why should this House pass yet another blank check for the war, as past Congresses have done?

Instead, this bill is based on a simple and logical idea: it makes America's continued involvement in Iraq conditional on the situation there improving.

America's soldiers will no longer be asked to fight in an open-ended war whose goal line keeps moving. This legislation requires Iraqi leaders to make the political compromises necessary to produce a working government that will function for all of Iraq—or else risk losing America's military support. And it will require security benchmarks to be met if American soldiers are to continue sacrificing their own safety for that goal.

But what is more, this bill represents the first step Congress has ever taken towards ending the war in Iraq.

A clear majority of the American people want this body to take decisive steps toward that end. A clear majority of our global allies want the same thing. A significant number of generals and military officials think that ending this conflict must be achieved sooner rather than later.

This bill is a response to their words, and to their counsel. It will not end the war immediately, nor will it end it recklessly.

Instead, it rejects the idea of a war in Iraq without end.

To continue funding this conflict without requiring any tangible progress to be made in Iraq makes no sense. It would achieve neither peace in that nation, nor security here.

But what it would achieve, Mr. Speaker, is the continued depletion and degradation of our military beyond all reason. It would continue to render our armed forces unable to fight in other parts of the world against other threats. And it would continue to force suffering soldiers to return to the battlefield time and again, despite physical and mental injuries.

We know the statistics: in addition to the 3,223 soldiers that have died, tens of thousands more have been injured, some permanently. And there are more than 32,000 Iraq veterans—32,000—who every day suffer silently from the scourge of mental health problems. More than 13,000 of those men and women have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD.

And yet, they are afforded no relief. The President's escalation of this conflict is forcing more soldiers back into combat sooner, with less rest, with less training, and with less time to heal. There are even reports of men and women being sent back to Iraq who are too injured to wear body armor.

Mr. Speaker, it is important not to view these realities in the abstract. I want to share with you a story I recently heard, the story of one young lieutenant currently awaiting his second deployment to Iraq.

Though he trained as an engineer, his first tour of duty saw him bravely patrolling dangerous streets north of Baghdad. He returned last December, and was initially expecting a year on base during which to rest and train a new platoon.

Instead, he will be heading back months sooner. He says that the soldiers under his command are not going to get the time they

need to train properly for their mission. The vehicles and equipment they now use to train for war are failing and often break. They are physically weary, with many still suffering from the lingering effects of leg and back injuries. Others are battling more elusive damage, and are in counseling for PTSD. He even told me that the vast majority of the once married soldiers in his unit are now or will soon be divorced. Their lives outside of the war are coming apart.

And yet, if you ask him, he will never complain about these difficulties. They are all part of the life of the soldier, he says, a few of the many challenges he and his men will confront every day they are deployed. When those in the military are given a mission, he told me, they find a way to complete it. That creed is the foundation of the strength of our Armed Forces.

It is the personification of the word sacrifice, Mr. Speaker. This young soldier and those under his charge are going back to Iraq again, even though they are wounded, and tired, and lacking in training and equipment. They miss their families. They miss their lives back home. But they are going all the same—going simply because this body has given the President the right to send them into battle.

But what this soldier did tell me is that our Armed Forces cannot go on like this. He said that if the foundation of our military's strength—its refusal to admit defeat—is misused, then we will end up destroying our system of national defense.

We hear the reports of the 82nd Airborne, for decades able to respond anywhere in the world within 72 hours, now struggling to respond to anything besides deployment orders sending its soldiers to Iraq.

We see men and women in uniform being sent back for tour after tour after tour, our services desperately trying to find a way to meet new troop requirements.

Mr. Speaker, this war represents a dramatic misuse of our military. In the name of our national security, it is undermining the only true guarantor of national security that we have: our Armed Forces. And for 4 years, this Congress let it happen.

But not any more. Today, the House will finally recognize that our military is at the breaking point—not because of any inherent weakness, but because it is being asked to complete a mission no army could succeed at.

And so, that mission must change.

The new strategy this bill sets forth has nothing to do with surrender, Mr. Speaker. Instead, it has everything to do with doing what must be done to work toward a secure Iraq. And it has everything to do with refusing to allow those who would do us harm fool us into defeating ourselves—in the process, attaining a victory that they will never be able to achieve on their own.

Let me say as well that this funding bill also respects our soldiers enough to put their needs at the forefront of our national priorities, instead of leaving them behind. From now on, if they are asked to go into battle without being fully armored, fully rested, and fully trained, then the President himself will have to stand before this country and explain why it is necessary to do so.

This bill will also provide desperately needed funds for veterans' health care. Our country is seeing more wounded soldiers returning from abroad than at any point in 40 years, and

yet for years, our health care system has failed thousands of them. It is unconscionable, and it is long past time that it was changed.

Finally, this bill both increases funding for the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and for a variety of other critically important national security objectives.

Taken together, it represents the beginning of what will be a responsible and ethical shift in our national security priorities away from a mistaken conflict in Iraq and back toward other concerns—the continued rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, for example, and the needs of wounded soldiers at home.

By changing a flawed strategy that has weakened our military for years without getting us any closer to a stable Iraq, this legislation represents our country's best chance to shake both of our nations free from the shackles of a stalemate benefiting neither.

It is an important and historic bill, one that the people of Iraq deserve, that the American people deserve, and that our troops most certainly deserve. I am proud to support it, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. MELANCON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Katrina-Rita supplemental. The President was quoted yesterday as saying we needed a clean bill to fund the rebuild of Iraq. I disagree with that statement and suggest that we need the comprehensive bill put forth by the majority, so that the people of the Gulf Coast States can rebuild. For too long we are funding the rebuilding of foreign communities. While this is admirable, the American people deserve first call on the rebuilding money, and help when it is their very tax dollars that are being spent.

My Caucus leadership took me seriously when I challenged them to put forth action rather than words. The supplemental appropriation bill we are debating tonight is the first and only vehicle available to Katrina-Rita affected citizens! Because of budgetary rules, there is no other opportunity to address the unfinished levees, the rebuilding needs of local governments, affordable housing so people can return, and help for the coastal fisheries and farmers who have, to date, been virtually ignored.

My colleagues in the affected Gulf Coast States need to decide where they stand. If we let this one chance for \$1.3 billion in levee assistance pass us by, every Member of Congress who votes against this should be held accountable for putting South Louisiana's citizens in harms way.

Are you in support of your Party, or are you for helping Louisianians, Mississippians and taxpaying Americans?

I support the Americans!

I would also like to submit the following clarification for the record:

This supplemental will provide funding for agriculture and fisheries disaster assistance along the Gulf Coast. For livestock producers, our intent is to increase the payment limit for those who lost hundreds of cattle as a result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These cattlemen have been inadequately compensated as a result of previously underfunded USDA programs. Our citrus growers—whose groves were destroyed from up to a month of saltwater several feet deep—should receive an increase in the payment rate for USDA's hurricane assistance program.

Additionally, this bill contains desperately needed assistance for our shrimp, menhaden,

as well as other fisheries that were devastated by the storms and, unfortunately have been forgotten for the past 18 months by the Administration and Congress.

Mr. McNULTY. Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 1970, during my first term as Town Supervisor of Green Island, I testified against the War in Vietnam at a Congressional Field Hearing in Schenectady, New York.

Several months after that testimony, my brother, HM3 William F. McNulty, a Navy medic, was killed in Quang Nam Province.

I have thought—many times since then—that if President Nixon had listened to the voices of reason back then, my brother Bill might still be alive.

As a Member of Congress today, I believe that the Iraq War will eventually be recorded as one of the biggest blunders in the history of warfare.

In October 2002, I made a huge mistake in voting to give this President the authority to take military action in Iraq. I will not compound that error by voting to authorize this war's continuation.

On the contrary, I will do all that is within my power to end this war, to bring our troops home, and to spare other families the pain that the McNulty family has endured every day since August 9, 1970.

Mr. SHULER. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, we entered the fifth year of the war in Iraq. Throughout that this Congress has provided the President with all the resources needed to wage this war. However, this body failed to provide any of the oversight he needed. Today, this Congress will correct that lack of oversight, while still providing our troops the funding they need and our military leaders the flexibility they require.

Today we say an open-ended commitment to this war is no longer acceptable. We say that we will no longer grant the President a blank check.

The war in Iraq has already lasted longer than World War I, World War II, and the Civil War. Continuing this war in the same manner with no accountability from the Administration or requirements on the Iraqi government is unacceptable.

Today, we stand up for our men and women in uniform; we honor our veterans, and we begin a new course to securing Iraq by passing H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act.

Passing this emergency funding guarantees our troops will have the equipment and resources they need. This bill demands that our troops are fully mission capable and meet the readiness standards set by the Department of Defense before we send them to war. And this bill demands the Iraqis get off the sidelines and begin fighting for their country.

The people of Western North Carolina sent me to Congress to ask the tough questions and demand accountability on this war. I have attended briefings at the White House and the Pentagon where I have been able to ask those questions. I have spoken to generals and troops on the ground, veterans and the families of those fighting. I have listened to my constituents, and I have prayed. I am confident that supporting this bill is the proper course of action. Soldiers support this bill. Generals support this bill. Veterans support this bill. The families of those fighting support this bill. A vote against this bill is a vote against our troops.

I am confident that this bill is a step in the right direction towards promoting a just and stable Iraq, and in bringing our nation closer to the day when all of our troops can return home to the warm welcome of a grateful Nation. May God bless our troops and their families, and may God bless the United States of America.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1591.

In considering what to say about H.R. 1591, I looked back at what I said in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD about House Resolution 861, an Iraq resolution from the 109th Congress in June of last year. I lamented the fact that 2,500 soldiers had died, 18,000 had been wounded, and 320 billion dollars had been spent or appropriated. I said that enough was enough and that it was time to begin redeploying troops to the periphery of the conflict and bring some of them home.

Sadly, in the last nine months, we have lost over 700 more troops and seen more than 5,000 additional soldiers wounded. We have little to show for our efforts, as Iraq is still in chaos and there is no peace in sight. I am afraid that if we do not take a different approach that this pattern will continue—progress in Iraq will not be made and increasing numbers of American soldiers will suffer. H.R. 1591 is a new, reasonable approach.

Like most Americans, I want Iraq to succeed as a stable democracy. But Iraqis have to want this too and actually work towards this goal in a meaningful way. H.R. 1591 encourages the Iraqi government to do this by offering our continued assistance, if it meets certain political and military benchmarks. These markers were laid out by President Bush in January. A further incentive for Iraq to take more responsibility for its own security is the knowledge that, under H.R. 1591, we will not be there forever. There will now be a date certain, August 2008, after which the Iraqi government could not longer rely on our soldiers for its security.

This is not just the right course for Iraq, it is the right course for America. After 4 long years, thousands dead and wounded, and hundreds of billions spent, it is time that this war comes to an end.

Ending the war in Iraq will stop the losses and devastating injuries inflicted on our troops. It will also allow us to redirect the billions that would otherwise be spent on Iraq to meet needed priorities here at home, such as providing health insurance to low-income children. I ask my colleagues to keep in mind this tremendous opportunity cost should we not stop the war.

While the legislation before us today will bring the war in Iraq to close over a reasonable period of time, it also supports our troops in the field. H.R. 1591 appropriates almost \$100 billion for ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. I strongly support our troops who have done everything asked of them with dignity, courage, and skill. It is with their safety and security in mind that I will vote in favor of this bill.

Beyond Iraq, H.R. 1591 contains over \$20 billion to meet other emergency priorities. These include resources for veterans' health care, recovery from the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, relief for farmers and ranchers from years of drought, and money to states for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

Enacting H.R. 1591 is thus important to address these emergencies, support our troops in the field, and end our involvement in the war in Iraq. I strongly encourage all Members of the House to support its passage.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this bill.

If the President of the United States were a rational decision maker, a bill of this kind would not be necessary in the first place. Unfortunately, the President continues to cling to the illusion that the situation in Iraq will improve if only we're willing to sacrifice still more American lives. But we cannot solve Iraq's civil war any more than we could solve Vietnam's civil war 40 years ago.

By unleashing forces he does not understand and cannot control, the President has put our military forces in an impossible situation. Our troops cannot referee Iraq's sectarian conflict. The longer our forces remain in Iraq, the more they become identified with a government that is seen as increasingly repressive, and incapable—or unwilling—to take the steps necessary to resolve Iraq's internal conflict politically and peacefully. It is for all these reasons that it is past time for Congress to take steps in forcing the President to change course and withdraw our combat troops.

This course correction is far slower and more difficult than I would like. I share the frustration of many of my colleagues that the President is not moving quickly enough or boldly enough to end our military involvement in Iraq. I for one do not expect the President to provide the Congress with accurate assessments of the readiness of our forces or of the Pentagon's ability to meet some key needs of the troops.

Existing DoD readiness assessments already show that our forces are overworked and overstretched. My friend from Pennsylvania, Mr. MURTHA, has included provisions in this bill that seek to limit the President's ability to deploy our ground forces to Iraq that are not truly ready and therefore less effective and more at risk. I believe zealous oversight of these provisions will be required if this bill becomes law. The President has shown he is willing to say or do anything to try to get his way when it comes to Iraq policy. He must not be allowed to politicize readiness assessments the way he has politicized intelligence assessments.

One bogus criticism of this measure is that setting a date certain for withdrawal is bad policy or micromanagement by the Congress. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been trotting this argument out frequently of late. Their position is undercut by the fact that they voted to impose time lines and benchmarks on President Clinton during our effort in the Balkans a decade ago.

By the way, I am pleased that this measure contains significantly increased funding for two critical areas of veterans health care: traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. We are only beginning to come to grips with the true costs of this conflict for our veterans, and we must take aggressive measures to ensure that they receive the follow up care they need to have the best possible chance of leading full, productive lives.

Mr. Speaker, we should be under no illusions regarding this bill. It is only the first concrete step in our effort to redirect our nation's policy in Iraq. Some weeks ago, we passed a non-binding resolution that pointed us in a

new direction with respect to the occupation and war in Iraq. That was the right thing to do, even though it was non-binding on the President. Similarly, this supplemental appropriation is beneficial, although the actual withdrawal of troops will require, I believe, additional forceful action by Congress to fulfill the provisions of this bill.

It is important to move forward with this measure now and force this President to make America's combat occupation of Iraq history rather than a limitless, open-ended future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CAPUANO). All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 261, the previous question is ordered on the bill, as amended.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

Pursuant to clause 10 of rule XX, the yeas and nays are ordered.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 218, nays 212, answered “present” 1, not voting 3, as follows:

[Roll No. 186]

YEAS—218

Abercrombie	Dingell	Kind	Brown (SC)	Johnson (IL)	Neugebauer
Ackerman	Doggett	Klein (FL)	Brown-Waite,	Johnson, Sam	Rogers (AL)
Allen	Donnelly	Lampson	Ginny	Jordan	Rogers (KY)
Altmine	Doyle	Langevin	Buchanan	Keller	Rohrabacher
Andrews	Edwards	Lantos	Burgess	King (IA)	Ros-Lehtinen
Arcuri	Ellison	Larsen (WA)	Burton (IN)	King (NY)	Roskam
Baca	Ellsworth	Larson (CT)	Buyer	Kingston	Royce
Baird	Emanuel	Levin	Calvert	Kirk	Ryan (WI)
Baldwin	Engel	Lipinski	Camp (MI)	Kline (MN)	Sali
Bean	Eshoo	Loebssack	Campbell (CA)	Knollenberg	Saxton
Becerra	Etheridge	Lofgren, Zoe	Cannon	Kucinich	Schmidt
Berkley	Farr	Lowey	Cantor	Kuhl (NY)	Sensenbrenner
Berman	Fattah	Lynch	Capito	LaHood	Sessions
Berry	Filner	Mahoney (FL)	Carter	Lamborn	Shadegg
Bishop (GA)	Frank (MA)	Maloney (NY)	Castle	Latham	Shays
Bishop (NY)	Giffords	Markey	Chabot	LaTourette	Shimkus
Blumenauer	Gilchrest	Matsui	Coble	Lee	Shuster
Boswell	Gillibrand	McCarthy (NY)	Cole (OK)	Lewis (CA)	Simpson
Boucher	Gonzalez	McCullom (MN)	Conaway	Lewis (GA)	Smith (NE)
Boyd (FL)	Gordon	McDermott	Crenshaw	Lewis (KY)	Smith (NJ)
Boysd (KS)	Green, Al	McGovern	Cubin	Linder	Smith (TX)
Brady (PA)	Green, Gene	McIntyre	Culberson	LoBiondo	Souder
Braley (IA)	Grijalva	McNerney	Davis (KY)	Lucas	Stearns
Brown, Corrine	Gutierrez	Meehan	Davis, David	Lungren, Daniel	Sullivan
Butterfield	Hall (NY)	Meek (FL)	Davis, Lincoln	E.	Tancredo
Capps	Hare	Meeks (NY)	Davis, Tom	Mack	Taylor
Capuano	Harman	Melancon	Deal (GA)	Manzullo	Terry
Cardoza	Hastings (FL)	Millender-	Dent	Marchant	Thornberry
Carnahan	Herseth	McDonald	Diaz-Balart, L.	Marshall	Tiaht
Carney	Higgins	Miller (NC)	Diaz-Balart, M.	Matheson	Tiberi
Carson	Hill	Miller, George	Doolittle	McCarthy (CA)	Turner
Castor	Hinchey	Mitchell	Drake	McCaull (TX)	Upton
Chandler	Hinojosa	Mollohan	Dreier	McCotter	Walberg
Clarke	Hirono	Moore (KS)	Duncan	McCrary	Walden (OR)
Clay	Hodes	Moore (WI)	Ehlers	McHenry	Walsh (NY)
Cleaver	Holden	Moran (VA)	Emerson	McHugh	Wamp
Clyburn	Holt	Murphy (CT)	English (PA)	McKeon	Waters
Cohen	Honda	Murphy, Patrick	Everett	McMorris	Watson
Conyers	Hooley	Murtha	Fallin	Rodgers	Weldon (FL)
Cooper	Hoyer	Nadler	Feeney	McNulty	Weller
Costa	Inslee	Napolitano	Ferguson	Mica	Westmoreland
Costello	Israel	Neal (MA)	Flake	Michaud	Whitfield
Courtney	Jackson (IL)	Oberstar	Forbes	Miller (FL)	Wicker
Cramer	Jackson-Lee	Obe	Fortenberry	Miller (MI)	Wilson (NM)
Crowley	(TX)	Olver	Fossella	Miller, Gary	Wilson (SC)
Cuellar	Jefferson	Ortiz	Foxx	Moran (KS)	Wolf
Cummings	Johnson (GA)	Pallone	Franks (AZ)	Murphy, Tim	Woolsey
Davis (AL)	Johnson, E. B.	Pascarella	Frelinghuysen	Musgrave	Young (AK)
Davis (CA)	Jones (NC)	Pastor	Gallegly	Myrick	Young (FL)
Davis (IL)	Jones (OH)	Payne			
DeFazio	Kagen	Pelosi			
DeGette	Kaptur	Perlmutter			
Delahunt	Kennedy	Peterson (MN)			
DeLauro	Kildee	Pomeroy			
Dicks	Kilpatrick	Price (NC)			

ANSWERED “PRESENT”—1

Stark

NOT VOTING—3

Davis, Jo Ann Kanjorski Watt

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). The Chair notes a disturbance in the gallery in contravention of the law and rules of the House.

The Sergeant at Arms will remove those persons responsible for the disturbance and restore order to the gallery.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). The Chair notes a disturbance in the gallery in contravention of the law and rules of the House.

The Sergeant at Arms will remove those persons responsible for the disturbance and restore order to the gallery.

□ 1243

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. WATT. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and was not able to get here to cast my vote on H.R. 1591. Had I been here, I would have voted for the bill.

□ 1251

AMENDMENT PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008; AND H.R. 1538, WOUNDED WARRIOR ASSISTANCE ACT

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, the Rules Committee intends to meet on Tuesday, March 27, at 4 p.m. to report a rule that may structure the amendment process for floor consideration of the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for the Fiscal Year 2008. The Committee on the Budget ordered the concurrent resolution reported on March 22, 2007, and is expected to file its report with the House later today.

Members who wish to offer an amendment to the concurrent resolution must submit 55 copies of the amendment and a brief description to the Rules Committee in H-312 in the Capitol no later than 10 a.m. on Tuesday, March 27. As in past years, the Rules Committee intends to give priority to amendments offered as complete substitutes. The text of the concurrent resolution should be available on the Rules Committee Web site later today.

Substitute amendments should be drafted by Legislative Counsel and also should be reviewed by the Office of the Parliamentarian to be sure that the substitute amendments comply with the rules of the House.

The Rules Committee is also scheduled to meet on Tuesday, March 27, at 4 p.m. to grant a rule which may structure the amendment process for floor consideration of H.R. 1538, the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act of 2007.