

or the Arab Sea across Yemen, due to fears of closing the Strait of Hormuz through which 18 million barrels pass daily. Western analysts expect that Iranian retaliation will include closing the Strait of Hormuz, bombing American bases, and burning down oil wells in the Gulf, in addition to bombing Israel with rockets from Iran directly, through Hezbollah in Lebanon or both.

Cheney expressed his conviction that striking Iran may be the best solution for the situation in Iraq, because Tehran has the biggest influence in the country and is the source of arms for militias. The source added that American estimates do not expect Iraqi Shiite retaliation against American troops in case war breaks out. Quite the contrary, the Sunni groups and militias will take the opportunity to settle accounts with the ruling government in Baghdad under America's support and protection. The same source indicated that Cheney asked his allies (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates) to reassure Sunni groups in Iraq and win them to the American side, passing a message that the U.S. has lost confidence completely in Al-Maliki government because of its failure to control the security situation and to achieve national reconciliation, including giving the Sunnis a bigger role in the decision-making process.

Cheney assured Gulf leaders that the Iranian nuclear reactor of Bushahr that lies on the other side of the Gulf will not be a target for strikes because it has no value and due to the presence of Russian experts at the reactor, and that even if it became a target of strikes, it would not cause pollution to the Gulf waters because it does not have depleted plutonium. Gulf states that obtain 90% of their water from treatment stations on the Gulf shores expressed to American officials their concerns and fears in the face of a water crisis which would be caused if a nuclear leak pollutes the Gulf waters in case of war with Iran.

The same source also confirmed that Cheney's talks in the four capitals focused on Iraq and Iran only and never dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was explained by a change of roles between Cheney and Rice, with the latter's role confined to the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

In Abu Dhabi, there are currently rumors about Mr. Nijad's asking the Emirates for mediation with Washington in the current nuclear crisis, and that he brought forth new ideas that an Emirate delegation will present to Washington in the next 2 days. The delegation is headed by crown-prince and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Sheikh Muhammad bin Zaid. The delegation left for Washington, D.C. already and has among its members the foreign minister of the Emirates.

□ 1930

IMPORTANT STEP TAKEN ON ISSUE OF DOMESTIC NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, we still hope to bring a 30-something hour to the floor this evening, but we may have to wait for another evening, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to briefly rise for a few minutes, potentially in replacement of our normal 30-something hour this evening, to talk about what I think is a very

important step forward that this Congress took today when it comes to the issue of domestic national security.

We hear a lot and have heard a lot from our President and from this Congress over the past several months about trying to change our course in Iraq, trying to do the right thing to make sure that our troops, that our soldiers there are not put in harm's way in the middle of a religious civil war.

For those of us who have been calling for a new direction in Iraq, we do so in part based on what our own intelligence community has told us, through the National Intelligence Estimate, that the war in Iraq, which has become what they call a cause celeb for the terrorist communities, is in fact making this country less safe, not more safe, by creating a breeding ground, a training ground for terrorists and in fact by growing the undeserved derision for this country across the world.

It points us to, I think, a misplaced allocation of resources. While we have been fighting a misguided and bungled war in Iraq, we have been leaving our own borders, leaving our own homeland unsecured.

We know that the National Guard and the Reserve troops are stretched to their limit. I have a GAO report from January of this year stating the high use of National Guard for Federal overseas missions has reduced equipment available for its State-led domestic missions.

Governor after Governor is telling us that their National Guards are not ready to respond to the national emergencies that may confront States. The Governor of North Carolina says, "We rely on the National Guard to respond to natural disasters, a pandemic or terrorist attack. Currently, we do not have the manpower or the equipment to perform that dual role," of responding to both State and Federal needs.

We know that our National Guard is stretched thin. We also know that over a period of time our local law enforcement personnel have been stretched thin as well.

For those of us that watched from State legislatures or from our place in the private citizenry, we were very proud of this Congress in conjunction with former President Clinton when they instituted the COPS program. Over 117,000 additional community police officers were put on the streets of this country. Every State of the Union was a beneficiary of this program.

That program was put by the wayside by this Republican Congress and this President. Today a lot of Republicans got up and spoke in favor of the bill today which basically reinvigorated that community policing program. But it was a Republican Congress that cut that program to the bone.

During the Clinton administration during the 1990s, the COPS program was funded at \$1 billion a year. By 2003, the Republican-led Congress had scaled

back COPS to \$198 million. And by 2005, to \$10 million. By 2006, the Congress had completely eliminated COPS funding.

Boots on the street, community police officers on the ground, you want to talk about the first defense against the next terrorist attack on this Nation, it is the community police officers, our law enforcement personnel on the ground.

Today, we made an historic investment in community policing. For my district alone, it means a 50 percent increase in the number of COPS-supported personnel on the ground.

We are going to set a new course in Iraq, and I believe that is going to make this country safer. We are going to put our National Guard and Reserve troops protecting their States. That will make us safer.

But today, this Democratic Congress showed that things changed by investing once again in community policing and the COPS program.

A lot of people wonder whether things really are changing in Washington or whether it is just talk. Today, by making an historic investment in community policing, we did the right thing for our brave law enforcement personnel and national security.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to be before the House of Representatives once again with the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY) to share with the American people and our colleagues some of the issues that are facing the United States of America today, and that I think will have ramifications for the future of this country.

The past few weeks here have been very exciting as we continue to try to press the President of the United States to find his way in Iraq and begin the withdrawal of our troops.

I think it is important for the American people to recognize the position of the majority party in the House of Representatives and the position of the majority in the United States Senate represented by Speaker PELOSI and Senate majority leader HARRY REID in which we are trying to begin the process of winding down the war in Iraq and expanding the global war on terrorism.

The war in Iraq does not have anything to do with the war on terrorism, and we hear from the President consistently that if we don't fight them over there, we are going to have to fight them over here. I think it is important for us to recognize that only 2 to 3 percent of the people fighting in Iraq are al Qaeda. We are in the middle of a civil war in a country that 70 percent of the citizens of that country in

Iraq believe it is okay to shoot American soldiers. That is where we are in the middle of this civil war, a religious civil war between religious groups and ethnic factions in which Americans in many instances are the targets of this civil war now.

We have seen in the last 4 months, Mr. Speaker, the deaths of more Americans in that 4-month period than any other 4-month period during the war. It is getting worse by the day. Many of us continue to talk to soldiers who come back and go back and forth, and they are very discrete with us and they share with us information that they are maybe not willing to say publicly. But if I have heard it from one soldier, I have heard it from 15 or 20 from my district and around the country who I have talked with. And they inevitably say: What is winning? What is winning this war?

We ask the President time and time again: What does winning mean? We are beginning to try the process that the President keeps vetoing of winding this war down.

When you have a scenario where you have a couple thousand or 3,000 or 4,000 U.S. and Iraqi soldiers in cities of over 100,000 trying to secure and trying to find out who these insurgents are when they all dress in civilian clothes, they all drive civilian cars. No one has a uniform on. No one is driving a tank. This is a guerrilla war that we are in the middle of. It is becoming very, very difficult for us to secure it. I believe we have missed the opportunity to secure that country because we lack troops.

I don't want to take all of the time up tonight. I know Mr. MURPHY is such a courteous New Englander that he would probably let me, but I think it is important that the citizens of this country know that the Democratic Party is trying to end this war. We want timetables. We want accountability, and the one thing that we are saying to the President of the United States, two things, this is not going to be an open-ended war and you are not getting a blank check.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Thank you, Mr. RYAN. I am nothing if not a fan of New England etiquette. I would let the gentleman speak for as long as he wishes, but he makes great points.

The American people sent this new Congress in order to set a new direction. They didn't imagine on election day that new direction was putting more troops in harm's way in the middle of a civil war. The word "escalation" was not in their vocabulary when they conceived of what that new direction would be.

They believed it was about time to start listening to the bipartisan foreign policy community as represented by the Iraq Study Group Report, of the record number of generals coming back and telling us we needed to start setting a new course. They believed that new direction was about redeploying our forces and bringing the National Guard home.

I hope tonight we will talk about how stressed the National Guard is, bringing the troops back home to protect ourselves on our homefront, and being able to respond to the natural disasters and emergencies that are all too frequent on our own shore, and begin to focus on places where we can still win.

Afghanistan, a fight that is taking it right to the insurgency that attacked this country, taking it right to the training ground of al Qaeda, the place where Osama bin Laden trained and prepared his forces to attack this country. Certainly we can win there, but it is time we start recognizing what that new direction has to be.

It was amazing when I listened to the Republican leader say a week or so ago, and I am paraphrasing, but the thought was that the Republicans were willing to hear out the President's plan to escalate the war for a period of time. But, say, by the fall or later this year if it wasn't working, it was time for the President to propose plan B.

I am not sure how anyone who has been watching this play out for the last 4 years could still believe we are on plan A. We are not plan A or B, we are on like plan triple R right now. We have tried everything. And guess what, every new strategy, every new approach that we take based solely on military might alone, which has been essentially our practice so far, has made the situation even more chaotic and has plunged Baghdad and its environs into greatest chaos.

Why? Guess what, because the rest of us, the American public and the Democratic Caucus, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, retired generals from every stripe, have realized that we cannot win this conflict. And everyone's definition of win is different, I understand, but we cannot prove victorious there on the force of our military might alone.

I got to spend a couple of days on the ground in Baghdad with those soldiers. If anyone can fulfill the mission they have been given, it is the men and women in the Armed Forces that we have put on the ground. They are the bravest and most capable people I have ever been around. But the fact is that we have given them a mission which is nearly impossible.

We are forcing them one day to be soldiers, the next day to be diplomats, and the next day to be civil engineers. The reason why plan A through Z has not worked yet is because it doesn't recognize the very fact that if we can solve this, if we can somehow bring some resolution to Iraq, it will be through diplomatic and political might, not sheer military force.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Just to think about the lack of planning and details for the whole deal, as these Iraqi troops are supposed to stand up, we are supposed to stand down. That is why in our supplemental we said let's work something out. There was no exact formula, but as one brigade of Iraqi troops are trained to the level the President certifies, we bring one home.

If the whole premise of the President's policy was as they stand up, we stand down, he has been saying that for such a long time, and that was in our supplemental bill that we passed a couple of weeks ago.

I know our good friend Steve Israel from New York and Ike Skelton have been promoting this idea for a long time, and that was in there. That is the kind of thing that the Democrats are doing.

But to focus on the lack of planning, not to beat a dead horse, but we now have soldiers over there who are in charge of two, three, 400 Iraqi soldiers. One person that I know who is in charge of 400 Iraqi soldiers, do you know how many interpreters he has to communicate with?

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. How many?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. One. He has one interpreter to help him communicate with 400 Iraqi soldiers.

Now these are all of the things that were not accounted for before we went into this place. That's what we are saying. There is a time and a place for military action. Afghanistan is the one we all cite, where they were harboring the al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

But now we have put these soldiers in a position where they are losing their friends. They are in dangerous situations. They don't know how long they are going to be there. Their tours keep getting extended, and you can't keep doing this to our soldiers.

And then you have a natural disaster in the United States and you don't have enough Guardsmen and -women to address the local problem.

□ 1945

Let's fix this. Let's work together to fix this problem and let's work with the President. Let's work with the members of the minority party in the House and the Senate to say let's start winding this thing down. That's what we want to do, and that's how I think we are going to begin to regain some credibility in the world. We are actually going to be pro-troop, pro-soldier by getting them out of a position that they can't survive in. We see the death tolls going up and we see what's happening at Walter Reed, and when you look at what we were able to do, immediate funding for the troops for the next 60 to 90 days and an evaluation of how we are doing, is that too much to ask?

I yield to my good friend.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, we have been in this fight over timetables, and so many of us believe that we have got to start setting a deadline on when the Iraqis are going to have to stand up for themselves. Okay, so we passed that, and the President vetoed, and we came back and said, all right, let's talk about something a little bit less than that. Let's talk about what you outlined.

Let's give you all the money you want and more for the next several

months for the conduct of this war, and then after that's done, let's see if it's working. That's a revolutionary concept here. Before we authorize the next round of several dozen billion dollars for the conduct of this war, let's just ask some questions. Is it working? Are the Iraqis doing what they need to do to achieve a political settlement? And guess what, the message is to that idea as well, that's not acceptable either; it is going to get a veto just like the first one.

There was a word that was just lost here for a long time. You and the 30-somethings talked about it night after night, but it was a foreign phrase to people and it is accountability. It is accountability.

Guess why the Iraqis consider going home for the summer? Why the parliament thinks it is okay to stand down? Because they know they have a crutch to rely on. They know that the Americans will be there as long as they continue to refuse to stand their military up, to stand their political institutions up, to stand up their ministries.

They know that, in fact, we're going to reward their incompetence. Enough is enough.

I got to spend a couple of days there, and in addition to spending some time with the troops you get to spend a little bit of time with the Iraqi military, and you can see that there's potential there. You can see that they are ready to do this mission but you can also see that there's no incentive there to do it right now.

And so that word "accountability" which has been lost here for so long is I think a large reason for why Congress looks a little bit different now, why you have a whole bunch of new Members who were sent here, not just to wrap up this war, not just to bring our troops home but to also instill in this government a sense that if we are going to spend taxpayer dollars, we better have some accounting for how it is done.

The two bills that we have passed, both the first bill that set a timetable to wrap up this war; the second bill, frankly, is as reasonable as you can get in trying to provide some benchmarks for success, they are both about that missing word missing here for a long time. It is accountability.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Absolutely. We have another thing to add to the list of the promises that were made that we rehashed here many, many times. When you look at we are going to be greeted as liberators, we only need \$50 billion, we can use the oil for reconstruction, you know, all of these things that were told to us before the war that ended up not being true, we have something that we can add as we have seen this week, May 12 edition of the news, and comparing it to this statement that the President made on the Iraqi government, New York Times, January 28, 2005, 'But asked if, as a matter of principle, the United States would pull

out of Iraq at the request of a new (Iraqi) government, he said,' the President said, "'Absolutely. This is a sovereign government.'

May 12, 2007, fast forward, majority of Iraq lawmakers seek timetable for U.S. exit. Majority of Iraq's parliament members signed a petition for a timetable governing withdrawal of American troops. The American people want us out. The Iraqi parliament wants us out. Seventy percent of the Iraqi citizens think it is okay to shoot an American soldier. This President is the only one in the world who thinks it's a good idea for us to stay there, and it's the same person who told us this slew of inaccurate data, information, tactic, strategy 5 years ago.

So we are trying to fix this problem, and we are having a heck of a time getting past this President. And he is the President and he does have the veto power, but he needs to recognize we want accountability. He's not getting a blank check, and this is not going to be an open-ended war.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. We talk about the enormous and unconscionable level of American casualties there, and the number that we focus on are the number of men and women who don't come back, and not enough focus gets put on the number of American soldiers who come back with grave, crippling injuries. But we don't talk at all about the number of Iraqis who have been killed, the immense civilian casualties that mount not by the two or three or four a day but mount by the dozens every day.

And so when you see what we are seeing now, which is an Iraqi parliament standing up and saying enough is enough, we need the Americans to go home, what you're hearing is a bunch of people who are realizing that the best way to keep their own people safe is to have the Americans stand down because, on more days than not, we are drawing additional fire into the chaos there.

We went over and asked the generals there, we said, listen, tell us how much of the fire that you are seeing in and around Baghdad is a result of Shia and Sunni violence and tell us how much of the fire is directed at American forces. And the stat was pretty amazing. Ninety percent of the fire there is fire directed from one religious civil group to the next, from one sect to the other. Ten percent of it is directed at American forces. It's an inexcusable 10 percent, but to think that we are asking our men and women to stand in the middle and be a human shield between Shia and Sunni fighting each other, in fact sometimes Shia and Shia, Sunni and Sunni fighting each other, is a miserable way to conduct foreign policy.

And I asked one of those soldiers, I said, you know, you're being asked one day to try to negotiate some political settlement between religious groups, when the day before they were shooting at each other; how on earth do you tell who's shooting at who? And the

soldier looked at me inquisitively, sort of shocked that I would ask the question. He said, we don't know who's shooting at us; if they are shooting at us, we shoot back. That's their job. That's their job, to protect them, to protect the people around them.

But as you said, the fact is when you can't tell who it is that's doing the shooting how on earth the next day are you going to be expected to sit down and try to mend the fences that gave rise to that violence in the first place?

Like I said, if anybody can do it, I think that these guys and women can do it. They are the most amazing, capable people that I have ever met in my life, but the fact is that if you don't know who's perpetuating the violence, it's very hard to heal those wounds the next day.

And to my mind, if the Iraqis are telling us that what they believe is necessary to make their country safe is a precipitous withdrawal of American forces, if our own intelligence community is telling us that we are less safe because of what's going on there, the Iraq Study Group, retired generals, American public, Iraqi parliament, intelligence community, there's a wall around Pennsylvania Avenue right now, and none of that seems to be going in there. And if we don't change course sooner or later, we're going to do damage that is not going to be even reversible by this Democratic Congress.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Let's look at what we are just trying to do. All we're saying is we're going to give the President, he wants \$100 billion and we're saying we want to give you \$30-some billion, and then D.C. lingo, fence the rest of the money in, the other \$50 or \$60 billion, until he comes back, the President comes back to us in July and is able to articulate to the United States Congress and the American people and the world what exactly the progress has been. And if you have progress, then you will be willing to come and make that argument to us here. And then we will have another vote, and we will decide if we are going to release the rest of the money or do something else, begin winding it down even quicker.

But I find it very disturbing, Mr. Speaker, that the President of the United States is not willing to come to the United States Congress, created by Article I, section 1 of the Constitution, the people's House, and articulate why our soldiers are still in Iraq, why we're not having success, why benchmarks aren't being met, why the Iraqi soldiers aren't being trained. You come back to the United States Congress and you tell us what the situation is, and then we control the money, and if there's progress we will give you more. If it continues like it's been going, we're going to give you enough to get these kids back home.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. This place has been a one-horse show for a real long time. You talk about the Constitution. It's kind of been a document

that's been dead and buried for a long time. People say the United States Congress here is to be an equal branch of the United States Government, to be able to operate within a structure that recognizes that not every single decision gets made by one man sitting in a house up the street; that people go out to elections in record numbers like they did last November and they should think, rightfully so, that what they say and the votes they cast are going to have some impact on what happens down there.

And I understand that the President's version of working together is us agreeing with whatever he asks us to agree with, but that's not what the American people sent us here to do. I certainly didn't get sent here to do this as a new Member, and the sooner that we recognize that you have a Congress for the first time in a long time that is going to stand up and speak for the people that sent us here, the sooner that happens the better.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate it, and you're absolutely right.

And we have got an obligation to do that, and the ramifications of this war are being felt all over. And one of the regrets that we have had is that we continue to run up this huge budget deficit in order to pay for the war. And it's time for us to start challenging those people who have been doing well, those people that this primarily has been the burden of this war, has primarily been the responsibility of those families and those soldiers who have been fighting in it, and the burden that they have faced has been much greater than anyone had anticipated. And so I think it's important for us to also recognize in our supplemental bill what we have been able to do and what we have tried to do with some of this additional money.

Almost \$2 billion for defense health care for those soldiers who are serving their country currently, that we put an extra couple billion dollars in there above the President's request to deal with the health care issue for those who are serving their country right now in this most dangerous time.

We also added an almost additional \$2 billion for veterans health care and made sure that we are taking care of our veterans when they come back. We are going to see a tremendous surge in veterans health care when these soldiers get back home, and we want to make sure that they have the resources necessary to do that.

We don't want this to be a country that promises you before you go to war all kinds of Cadillac coverage and then when you get back you're left on your own. The Democratic Party had attempted to fix that through the supplemental process, and again, that bill was vetoed.

\$500 million in there for post-traumatic stress disorder, which is going to be a huge problem given the kind of environment that these kids are fighting in.

\$500 million in there for brain injuries, again a major problem with those soldiers who are coming back injured.

We're trying to take care of our veterans, and we're doing a good job, but we keep getting this process and these bills vetoed by the President of the United States, and it is very important that we begin to recognize that this can no longer be a stumbling block.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the Democratic-led Congress, in our budget authorization bill several weeks ago, put in there the largest increase for veterans spending in the history of the veterans administration. We are trying to take care of our veterans, and we are doing it in spite of what the President is trying to do by consistently vetoing our bills.

□ 2000

We are putting the money forward, we are asking for some accountability, we are taking care of our veterans, we are taking care of our soldiers, we are making sure that they don't leave to go over to Iraq without the proper body armor, the proper Humvee, up-armored Humvees, and the proper amount of rest.

Our soldiers are getting worn out by continuously extending their tours, by sending them back second, third, fourth tours, their families are having problems, high divorce rates. We are seeing it all over. It's time for us to refocus.

Then, when you look at who else is being affected by this situation that we have in Iraq, you are also seeing the issue with the National Guard readiness. We have seen, unfortunately, over the last couple of weeks, because of the natural disasters and the tornados, especially in places like Kansas, where the National Guard does not have the equipment, in many instances they don't have the manpower to try to deal with the issues that they are facing in their own State. There are so many issues that are being affected.

Let me just share with you some of these problems that we have and what we are trying to do to address that. We put in, in the last supplemental bill, \$2 billion not requested by the President for a new strategic reserve readiness fund, of which \$1 billion is for Army National Guard equipment shortfalls. We are trying to address it.

The President vetoed that too. So bad enough you are vetoing health care for our soldiers, you are vetoing health care for our veterans to the tune of \$2 billion; you are vetoing veterans health care for post-traumatic stress disorder; you are vetoing health care for those soldiers who come back with brain injuries. You are also vetoing an extra \$1 billion for Army National Guard equipment.

I mean, come on. We are trying to move this process forward. You know, it's a typical D.C. move, that if it's not your idea, we are against it. You know, if I didn't come up with it, I'm against it. That has been the President's attitude.

We can't have it, because it's not us that is suffering; we are in air conditioned quarters. We got offices, cars, nice meals, you know. Our families are here with us.

It's the soldiers who are suffering, and their families who are suffering, bearing the brunt of this war.

This is Lieutenant General Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau: "The Governors are rightly concerned that while the personnel part of the Guard has never been better, never been more ready, the equipment piece to the National Guard back here at home has never been less ready, and they are trying to resolve that obvious disconnect. The message is clear what we have, and the budget does not produce the level of readiness that they feel comfortable with."

Just being admitted. That's being admitted by the chief of the National Guard Bureau. This is the Government Accountability Office report from 2007, just a couple of months ago in January. This is a nonpartisan bureau that we have here: "The high use of the National Guard for Federal overseas missions has reduced equipment available for its State-led domestic missions. At the same time it faces an expanded array of threats at home."

Reduced equipment available for our National Guard; our soldiers, not having the proper body armor; our Humvees not properly up-armored; our soldiers not getting the proper rest; our veterans not getting the kind of health care that they deserve; our defense, our soldiers in the Defense Department, not getting the level of health care and attention that they need and that they deserve; and an American public that wants this war to be over. Sixty percent say that it was a mistake to go in the first place.

We have an obligation to respectfully and orderly wind this war down and begin a surge of diplomacy in the Middle East, asking our neighbors in the Middle East, asking the United Nations to take part in a peace-keeping effort in Iraq, making sure that our soldiers are there and the periphery, a certain number, to make sure that we are still in the region to a certain extent to protect against some kind of Iranian influence.

I yield to my good friend, who I know has been very busy tonight. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to honor your commitments.

I yield to my good friend from Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, it's always good to be on the floor with you. It's like old times, like the 108th Congress, TIM RYAN from Niles, Ohio, and KENDRICK MEEK from Miami/Liberty City, Florida.

The good thing I like about doing the work, we are working not only with new Members that appeared in the last Congress, but we have a level of consistency, even in the majority. Mr. RYAN serves on the very powerful Appropriations Committee. I serve on a

committee called the Ways and Means Committee and Armed Services. These are just committees that have an awful lot of work, and there is a lot to do.

But we are here tonight because it's very, very important to the country. I don't have a family member in Iraq. I don't have a family member on their way to Iraq, but I do have constituents that fall within that circle of individuals.

As we move this conference report, hopefully, it will go through the conference session that's going on to the President, and that the President doesn't veto this bill. Now, I am going to say this, because one may say politically, you probably wanted the President to do it, because he will go down further in the polls. It's not about polls, as far as I am concerned. It's about accountability to the men and women in harm's way.

One may think, well, this has nothing really to do with me. We have a volunteer Armed Forces, and they have signed up and they knew full well, some of them knew full well they would be deployed. We have Reservists signed up. Some of them knew this threat would come one day that they would have to be deployed on a third and fourth tour. You have National Guard men and women that signed up, they were going to be federalized. They had to know they would be federalized at some point to go out and fight on behalf of the country.

I just would like to make this point that if one may feel that this has nothing to do with your immediate family, you have to think about what the war in Iraq is doing to our country right now, our financial standing, our financial security. We have an administration in the last Congress, which was the rubber stamp Republican Congress, that passed everything that the Bush White House called for and asked for. Billionaires received tax cuts that they didn't even see coming, but it was a gift to them from the Bush administration.

Now, we have borrowed more from foreign nations than we ever borrowed in the history of the Republic. I am from Florida. For those of you who are Members from Gulf States and along the eastern seaboard, this is your issue. Even those from the Midwest or even from the west coast, this is your issue, making sure that we have the benchmarks in place, making sure that we have the accountability in place, when you look at the dollars we are spending, how about the billions of dollars, trillions of dollars we are spending on this war. It's your issue. To the small-town mayor, to the big-city mayor, to the county commissioner, or parish or State legislature, this is your issue.

Some folks said, well, in Washington, you all talk about Iraq, Iraq and Iraq again, and then that other issue, Iraq. The reason why on this floor Iraq is uttered every day, almost once an hour, two or three times an hour, is how can we deal with a national health care

plan for children? How can we deal with an issue as it relates to helping small businesses? How can we prepare ourselves to take on the wave of veteran affairs that we have to take responsibility for, because we promise our veterans that we will stand with them because they stood with us?

How can we do all of those things when we are carrying on the back an Iraqi Government that I must add is looking at going on a 2-month vacation, and the majority members of the Iraqi Parliament have already said they want a timeline on when U.S. troops are going to be out of Iraq.

When you hear things about building a wall in Iraq, when you hear the reports over the weekend, Mother's Day weekend, as we were celebrating Mother's Day weekend, including myself, on honoring our mothers, my mother and my wife and all, we have to hear the report about our men and women on patrol in Iraq hit by an improvised explosive device as they patrolled at 4-something in the morning, and an Iraqi response team from our military showed up, 40 minutes after that event, and come to find a burning Humvee, burning, and those that died in that explosion, and three of our men that we are still combing the streets of Iraq for right now, along with coalition forces.

These are the very things that we talk about in this bill. We talk about not only the human loss, and, since when I always come to the floor, I just want to say that as of May 15 at 10 a.m., which is the latest, 10 a.m. report, death toll is up 3,393; wounded in action and returned to duty is 13,975; wounded in action and not returned to duty is 11,270. That number continues to go up.

It's very, very important. We pay very close attention to this. So when we have the legislation to make sure the troops have what they need, make sure that our veterans have what they need, making sure we respond to the work that was not done in the last two Congresses, we deal with what happened in the Gulf States in Katrina, doing right by them, doing right by their children, that their health insurance is about to expire, the very children of our country.

Just today I was on the steps talking to an elementary school, Phyllis Ruth Miller Elementary School, in my district. I was talking to over 100 kids that are elementary kids and some of their teachers. They were asking about Iraq, and they were asking about the war. They were concerned, and one of the young men asked, well, Congressman, do you believe when I get of the age that, you know, I would love to be a member, I would love to be a soldier, a member of the Army, do you think I will be deployed to Iraq?

I had to have a discussion with him about how we are trying to work in a diplomatic way. We want a surge in diplomacy. We want a surge as it relates to an escalation and other countries taking part in what we are doing.

If it's about, you know, dropping bombs and all of that, we can do that better than anyone else on the face of the Earth. But when you start putting our men and women into responsibilities when a country should take responsibilities for themselves, then we are talking about another thing.

I think it's also important for us to note that the bouncing ball as it relates to what the President says and what he means are two different things. One minute we listen to the commanders in the field. The next minute we know what's good for the commanders. One minute we say that if the Iraqi Government, and I just happened, I asked staff to pull this up, when the President was asked, and he said, But asked if, as a matter of principle, the United States would pull out of Iraq at the request of a new (Iraqi) Government," he said, this is a question that was posed to him, " Absolutely. This is a sovereign government."

The elected Parliament, a majority of the elected Parliament have said they want a timeline. Now, in Congress we are saying we want a timeline, and we want benchmarks. The President is saying, I am not going to allow you to do it. We have a Republican minority saying we are standing next to the President. Then we had 11 Members of the Republican side go talk to the President and say, hey, you know something, we can only stand in for so long.

Now, if I was thinking in political terms and thinking about serving on the committees I am serving on and staying in the majority and being a part of leadership meetings and so on and so on, I would say, fine. Let the Republican minority stick with the President. Let the President, let's just sit back, let's be quiet. Let's just let the President talk because as far as I am concerned politically, the gain is going to be to Democrats in Washington, D.C.

But if it wasn't war, if it wasn't the future of our children and our children's children, if it wasn't the amount of debt that has been accumulated with two wars going on and tax cuts that no one asked for, and the super, super wealthy are getting tax cuts, subsidies, the oil companies that Mr. RYAN tried to address in the first wave of alternative energy and alternative fuel.

I am a little glad to see the President talk about an energy plan yesterday, and take our dependency off of foreign oil or energy and focus on America. I am so glad that the President has caught up with the American people and the Democratic Congress and moving in that direction. We have already done that.

So the real issue here is if we just pay attention to what people are saying, I think that we can figure out why they are doing what they are doing. The President, yes, he is going to be President, his term will be up in 2008. We want to support the Commander in Chief as far as we can.

But as a democracy, as a Congress, we owe it to the people of the United States of America to continue to get good and accurate information out to them and to make sure that every Member of Congress knows exactly what he or she is voting on or not voting on.

You heard me say before, it's important that Members of the Congress on both sides of the aisle, that we go see the wizard, that we get a little leadership, get a little courage, okay? Go to the President and say, hey, listen, this is the way it's going to be. This is not going away. The American people are on the side of what's good for America. They are not necessarily saying, you know, we love Democrats or we love Republicans. They just want good government, and good government is making sure we have responsibilities.

Mayors come and speak with me. I had a city commissioner come talk with me today. She was sharing with me about, you know, all of the things that she has to go through to get a Federal grant.

□ 2015

Well, I don't hear the Iraqi Government talking about all the things and the loopholes and accountability measures they have to go through to get the taxpayer dollar. And I think it's important that we pay very, very close attention to that as we move through.

Let me just speak one more second, Mr. RYAN, not one more second, but several seconds.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Take your time.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you, sir.

I mentioned earlier, I'm from Florida. June 1 is a very important date to those of us that are in Hurricane Alley. June 1 is the beginning of hurricane season. Hurricane season will be, this hurricane season has been predicted, Mr. Speaker, to be one of the most active seasons in recent time. And Florida is probably the most prepared State as it relates to response because we've gone through it so much. And the reason why we're able to respond to a number of natural disasters and hurricanes, which we have a number of wild fires that are going on right now in Florida, is that we have one of the best National Guard units on the face of the Earth, period. But 53 percent of the diesel or used equipment that they had to respond to storms, because they're the first responders, they're already staging outside of the hurricane zone to respond as first responders. They don't even have the equipment that they need to respond.

In Kansas, Mr. RYAN, the Governor of Kansas said, you know, our emergency management plan called for a response from the National Guard. Those that are still left in the State of Kansas, but, they're having to use their personal vehicles. They're having to do other things to make up for the equipment that's jammed with sand over in Iraq.

We must have accountability now. We must have benchmarks now. It's al-

most saying to school age children that it's okay, you can go to school, we won't grade you on anything. There'll never be a test. You just, you know, do your time and everything will work out.

Everything that we strive for to be successful in, even in business or in government, you have to have benchmarks. You have to have accountability. And what the President and some of the Members of the minority side of the aisle, some of them, not all of them, I must add because I know that there are a number of my Republican colleagues that are saying we're headed down the right track and they have voted in the affirmative, in a bipartisan vote to send that message to the White House.

And what the President hasn't come to grips with, including some members of his Cabinet, that this is a democracy, and guess what, the whole cake and ice cream thing, you write it, we just follow you kind of thing is over. It's over. The people of America voted for accountability. They voted for standards. They voted for transparency, and they're going to get it as long as we have the majority here in this Congress to give the American people what they ask for. That's what their vote is all about.

I think it's also important for us to realize that when you look at these States, and this is just Florida, the National Guard was down 500 Humvees, 600 trucks, short 4,000 pair of night vision goggles, and needed 30 more wreckers. This is from Colonel Ron Title, who is brass in our Florida National Guard. He's not talking on behalf of the Democratic Party or Republican Party. Here's a man that said, I'm going to serve in the Florida National Guard, and I'm just talking about preparedness. I'm talking about our ability to be able to respond to a natural disaster.

What are we going to do, turn around and call Georgia? I'm pretty sure Georgia has some of the same issues.

Turn around and call Alabama? Alabama, last I checked, there are a lot of National Guard men and women there, and I guarantee you their equipment, if not more in Iraq, they don't have the ability to come to Florida.

And so when you look at these other States and the response of the National Guard, then you have to get active duty troops involved and you have to fly things in and carry on. If we had accountability in place, and we had proper planning in place, that's what this bill calls for.

Mr. RYAN, this is the last money for Iraq and Afghanistan that will not go through the regular budget process because, Mr. Speaker, when that happens, accountability is paramount. Transparency hearings, everything is accounted for. Not just giving a checkbook to someone in Iraq and say, well, in the early days, giving them cash and just say go to work. That's not good accounting practices and should not be encouraged.

And so the old saying, if we know better, we'll do better, well, you know, by now, 5 years in the war, we should all know better. And we're trying to do better.

We have a majority in place right now, Mr. RYAN and Members, that are willing to do better, have the will and the desire to do it. The good thing that I like about, I was listening to what you were saying before I was recognized. Mr. RYAN, I remember the days that we were on the floor and we used to talk about if we had the opportunity, this is what we'll do. We'll make sure that veterans have what they need to have when they return back, and those that have served in past wars, that we honor their commitment by honoring them, making sure that they have a VA health care system they can be proud of.

We said that we would work to make sure that children have health care in this country, and we've already taken action on that.

We said that we would implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations. We have already done that. Waiting on the President's signature.

We said that we would put rules in place within the House rules to bring about ethics and have an active ethics committee, which has already happened, Mr. Speaker. It's not something that we said, well, if we get around to it. It's already happened.

So when we talk about the functions of good government, those principles are already in place. And so now we just need the help of the President of the United States to work with the Congress and not dictate to the Congress about what we should be doing, how we should be doing it. He's had 5 years. He's had 5 years to say, this is the way it's going to be. So shall it be written, so shall it be done.

And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and being a Member of the past two Congresses, serving, Mr. RYAN and I served on the Armed Services Committee. We don't want to leave our men and women without equipment and the things that they need. And supplements in the past, I didn't like a lot of the language in it, but I voted for it for the greater good, for the greater good.

And we counted on the Defense Department to be accountable with the money. We counted on all of the things that we're being told about the equipment being on the ground when the men and women get there. Now we find out that some of that was not true, a lot of that was not true. And there's been so many things that have been told and so many apologies that have been sent out in press releases.

Those days are over. We must have accountability in place. So when the President, if the President follows through on his threat, Mr. RYAN, to veto it, I'm glad that you talked about the things that he will veto; that he's going to deny the men and women in harm's way. He's going to deny children to have health care. He's going to

deny veterans from getting the veterans services that they deserve, and he's going to deny us being able to hold our head up.

But I'm going to hold my head up because I'm doing my part and I'm doing my part right now on Memorial Day when we commemorate those that paid the ultimate sacrifice. And vetoing the largest increase in the VA history.

I'm just talking about a few things, leave alone the accountability measures at the Department of Defense. They already had the rules in place. They just weren't honoring those rules. We put it in the supplemental, this emergency supplemental. So now, within this law and within the dollars that will be flowing into the field and throughout America, they're going to have accountability measures in it.

So I'm not talking about what the Republican Congress did not do or what they call themselves doing, or what the President did not do or called himself doing. I'm just talking about what we're doing now and the opportunity that's presented before us. And I'm so happy, Mr. RYAN, that we are moving in that direction. I yield back to you, sir.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Well, I appreciate you coming down and articulating that. And it's been consistent since we've gotten in with the first 100 hours as to what we're doing now, what we plan on doing, what we've passed out of this House, what we've passed out of this House sometimes on several different occasions.

And if you look at the two major supplemental votes, you look at, you know, what did we do in the first one is we put timelines in there, deadlines in there, date certain we're going to get out of there.

And you stated, I think, so articulately, that the Iraqi soldiers, if they know we're going to be there, then they're going to continue to rely on us. And if you leave the training wheels on the bike, you're never going to learn how to ride on two wheels. And it's time to take the training wheels off, Mr. MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. RYAN, I don't remember the last story of a state that continued to receive money, have not been accountable to Federal dollars, I mean, haven't been accountable in spending those Federal dollars. News report comes out that it actually took place, and then we turn around and say, oh, well, we know you didn't spend the last billions of dollars we gave you. We're going to give you some more. As a matter of fact, we're going to come down and help you spend this money, and we're going to come down and be a part of this lack of accountability by your government. And then we're going to reward you with another emergency supplemental that has no strings attached.

You can't reward bad behavior or lack thereof. You cannot say, well, it's okay, Governor. It's okay, mayor. It's okay, county commission or city com-

mission. If you're not accountable with the dollars, we're going to continue to send it to you.

I don't know a police department that received Federal assistance from FEMA, okay, who did not do, did not follow the plan of hiring and training and making sure that they can patrol their own streets, and we sent Federal law enforcement individuals down there to do the everyday calls for service. That doesn't happen in America. It should not happen in Iraq as long as our taxpayer dollars are being spent, and dollars that we've borrowed, Mr. RYAN, I must add, from foreign nations.

This country is in a financial situation as it relates to borrowing from foreign nations unlike any other time in the history of the Republic. So as we move in this majority body here to correct those issues, this is a wonderful opportunity for this government to correct itself on the legislative branch and the executive branch, to do the right thing, to be accountable for the taxpayer dollars, and, Mr. RYAN, the dollars that we've borrowed from other countries, that we have to figure out how we're going to pay them back, and at the same time continue to maintain some sort of financial standing within the world.

Mr. RYAN, it's always a pleasure, sir, coming to the floor and working with you and other members of the 30-something Working Group. I know we'll be back a couple of other times this week before we finish on Friday.

But we have to stay the course. I'm going to use one of the administration's words; stay the course on behalf of those who stood for us to be able to talk here in this air conditioned Chamber, saluting one flag. We have to stand up for those who have sent us here to represent them. And there are people who can vote. There are people who cannot vote. They're Republican. They're Democrats. They're independents. The individuals that are watching what happens now, because as we look back 20 years from now, folks are going to ask, who stood up? Who stood up for them? Who stood up for their children? Who stood up for their grandchildren?

It's not about my family. It's about all of our families. If you want to talk about family values, then let's start doing things on behalf of the American people, and let's make sure that future generations have a better opportunity than we have.

When that kid asked me on the steps of the Capitol, Mr. Congressman, I want to join the Army; I want to be a soldier. Am I going to war? That answer shouldn't have been diplomacy and all that. It should have been, we're doing our job and working with the international community and keeping America safe and, yes, if you want to go into the Army, you should go into the Army and serve our country like so many others have done.

But it's a sad commentary when we're here debating the obvious of

what we have to do. Accountability with the taxpayer dollars and accountability to those who woke up hearing mortar, hearing improvised explosive devices going off, looking at these vehicles towed in from the streets of Baghdad because we're doing the job that the Iraqi Government should be doing. And we have to stay the course, and making sure that we stand up for those that don't have the opportunity to walk through this door and put their voting card in these machines and vote on behalf of their future and their families.

□ 2030

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate it.

Use www.Speaker.Gov to access our Web site. E-mail 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov.

Mr. MEEK, as always, it is an honor, a pleasure, and a privilege to just share this floor with you, my friend.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 2117

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. CASTOR) at 9 o'clock and 17 minutes p.m.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1585, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. WELCH of Vermont, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-151) on the resolution (H. Res. 403) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2008, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1427, FEDERAL HOUSING FINANCE REFORM ACT OF 2007

Mr. WELCH of Vermont, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-152) on the resolution (H. Res. 404) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1427) to reform the regulation of certain housing-related Government-sponsored enterprises, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.