Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—14

Berkley
Cole (OK)
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Kucinich
Lewis (CA)
Musgrave
Pickering
Saxton
Stark
Tancredo
Wilson (OH)
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain for this vote.

□ 1210

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 240, nays 178, answered ''present'' 1, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 622]

YEAS—240

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Baker
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bono
Boozman
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castle
Castor
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fortenberry
Frank (MA)
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Goodlatte
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Kingston
Klein (FL)
Kuhl (NY)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mack
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McMorris Rodgers
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Paul
Payne
Petri
Pickering
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Rehberg
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Sires
Skelton
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tierney
Towns
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walsh (NY)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Woolsey
Wynn

NAYS—178

Altmire
Bachus
Baird
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Boren
Boustany
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carney
Carter
Chabot
Chandler
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cramer
Cuellar
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Donnelly
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Ellsworth
English (PA)
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gingrey
Goode
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Kagen
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
LaHood
Lamborn
Larsen (WA)
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mahoney (FL)
Manzullo
Marchant
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moore (KS)
Moran (KS)
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pastor
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Reichert
Renzi
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Shadegg
Shays
Shuler
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Space
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Thompson (CA)
Tiberi
Turner
Udall (CO)
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wolf
Wu
Yarmuth
Young (FL)

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—1

Gohmert

NOT VOTING—12

Berkley
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Kucinich
Marshall
McNerney
Murphy, Tim
Simpson
Slaughter
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1217

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 533, I call up the bill (H.R. 2956) to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2956

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act''.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243), enacted into law on October 16, 2002, authorized the President to use the Armed Forces as the President determined necessary and appropriate in order to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by the Government of Iraq at that time;

(2) the Government of Iraq which was in power at the time the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 was enacted into law has been removed from power and its leader indicted, tried, convicted, and executed by the new freely-elected democratic Government of Iraq;

(3) the current Government of Iraq does not pose a threat to the United States or its interests; and

(4) after more than four years of valiant efforts by members of the Armed Forces and United States civilians, the Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future course.

SEC. 3. REQUIREMENT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ AND TRANSITION TO A LIMITED PRESENCE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq beginning not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall complete the reduction and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq by not later than April 1, 2008.

(b) REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TO BE CARRIED OUT IN A SAFE AND ORDERLY MANNER.—The reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq required by subsection (a) shall be implemented in a safe and orderly manner, with maximum attention paid to protection of the Armed Forces that are being redeployed from Iraq.

(c) REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TO FURTHER COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY.—The reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq required by subsection (a) shall further be implemented as part of the comprehensive United States strategy for Iraq required by section 4 of this Act.

SEC. 4. COMPREHENSIVE UNITED STATES STRATEGY FOR IRAQ.

(a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than January 1, 2008, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive United States strategy for Iraq.

(b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The strategy required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A discussion of United States national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region and the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

(2) A justification of the minimum force levels required to protect United States national security interests in Iraq after April 1, 2008, including a description of the specific missions of the Armed Forces to be undertaken. The justification shall include—

(A) the projected number of Armed Forces necessary to carry out the missions;

(B) the projected annual cost of the missions; and

(C) the expected duration of the missions.

(3) As part of the justification required by paragraph (2), the President shall, at a minimum, address whether it is necessary for the Armed Forces to carry out the following missions:

(A) Protecting United States diplomatic facilities and United States citizens, including members of the Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions.

(B) Serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions.

(C) Engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al-Qaeda and its affiliated organizations in Iraq.

(D) Training and equipping members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

(4) Specific plans for diplomatic initiatives to engage United States allies and others in the region to bring stability to Iraq.

(c) UPDATE OF STRATEGY.—Not later than July 1, 2008, and every 90 days thereafter, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees an update of the strategy required by subsection (a), including a description of the number of Armed Forces deployed to Iraq and the missions for which such Armed Forces are so deployed.

(d) FORM.—The strategy required by subsection (a) and each update of the strategy required by subsection (c) shall be transmitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex, if necessary.

(e) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

SEC. 5. ARMED FORCES DEFINED.

In this Act, the term ''Armed Forces'' has the meaning given the term in section 101 of title 10, United States Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARDOZA). Pursuant to House Resolution 533, debate shall not exceed 4 hours, with 3 hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) each will control 90 minutes, and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. Speaker, out of all of this Iraq business, there's one star, and that star, as every American should know and appreciate, is the young American in uniform. That is the purpose of this legislation, and I take this opportunity to compliment those who serve our country wherever they may be, those in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world or here within our United States. I'm proud of them. And they are our stars.

Mr. Speaker, we have been engaged in Iraq since March of 2003. And in hearing discussion on the rule, it's obvious that some people wish to confuse the effort in Afghanistan with the effort in Iraq. They are separate and distinct.

The war in Afghanistan is something that we needed to do. The Taliban government gave sanctuary to the al Qaeda terrorists in that country of Afghanistan, and we did the right thing by going in there.

The war in Iraq is one of choice. There have been discussions and difficulty and debate over how we got there, but we are there. But people should know that the insurgency in Iraq and the subsequent sectarian violence between the Shiite and Sunni is a different and distinct war from that in Afghanistan.

You know, in history, we learn from the past. Strategic mistakes have been made, and we're supposed to learn from that. And we have to go to our revolution in 1776, when the British General Howell did not follow up his victories against George Washington's troops on Long Island. Consequently, George Washington's troops were able to encamp at Valley Forge and later attack successfully Trenton and New Jersey. That was a strategic mistake that allowed our revolution to be successful.

Lee's invasion of the north, the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg, were strategic mistakes of the Confederacy.

And, Mr. Speaker, sadly, we have seen not only strategic mistakes in Iraq, we have seen irretrievable strategic mistakes; no plan for the aftermath, the initial victory, the number of troops was not as General Shinseki recommended, far too few; the unguarded caches of weapons and ammunition, allowing the insurgency to have free access to them; the dismissal of the Iraqi Army, rather than giving them a pay check and a shovel, the closing of the Iraqi industries, the deBaathification, which put thousands of people out of work, including thousands of school teachers. These irretrievable mistakes made it very difficult for us to have any sort of positive success in that country.

We hear the call, well, wait until September. There'll be another report. Well, we have been in Iraq for four Septembers. There is the old song that those of us with a little gray in our hair remember as the September song. And one line from that song of yesteryear, ''we haven't got time for the waiting game.'' That's where we are now. We don't have time for the waiting game.

The purpose of this is a matter of readiness. It's a matter of national security. It's a matter that we must face now, or else the strain and stretch on our ground forces, particularly the Army and, of course, the Marines, will be beyond repair for many, many years.

It's a matter of strategic importance that we redeploy from Iraq in a responsible manner, and that's what this bill does. And we are able to keep our forces strong.

We never know what's going to happen. The last 30 years, we've had 12 military contingencies in which our Armed Forces have been engaged, four

of which have been major in size; none of them predictable. We don't know what the future holds. But for national security interests, we need to have a ready force, particularly our ground forces, which are being strained so very much now.

Further, it is important that we pass the security of Iraq over to the Iraqi government and to the security forces of that country. We cannot hold their hand forever. They must step up to the plate and take over their own security. It's important that that happen.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, initially sets forth a sense of Congress that the authorization for use of military force against Iraq was enacted into law in October of 2002, and that the government of Iraq that was in power at that time has been removed and it's leader tried, convicted and executed by a freely elected government of Iraq; and further, that the government of Iraq, the current government of Iraq does not pose a threat to the United States, and for more than 4 years, the efforts of our Armed Forces have been valiant in their work and in their combat in that country.

We need a responsible redeployment. This legislation gives it to us. It states that the Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of armed forces in that country beginning not later than 120 days after the date of enactment. It also states that such redeployment shall be complete to a limited presence which is spelled out in the bill, not later than April 1, 2008.

The question before us, are we, as a country, any safer now than we were when we went into Iraq in March of 2003? What has it done for the security of our country?

We see the sectarian violence, on top of the insurgency, the insurgency being aided by foreign fighters, many of them al Qaeda, and consequently, we know that the end must be done by the Iraqi security forces. That's what we are trying to do in this legislation; responsible redeployment of the American forces, cause the Iraqi troops and forces to take over their own security, and restore the readiness to our ground forces here in the United States.

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

□ 1230

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, following my remarks and Mr. SKELTON's remarks, I understand we are going to yield to the Foreign Affairs Committee, and I would yield an additional 15 minutes of my time to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and also I would yield 30 minutes of my time to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG) and that he may be allowed to yield time in turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, time may be so controlled.

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, I want to express my great respect for my colleague, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, a partner on many, many legislative endeavors and a gentleman who really has the welfare of the troops of the United States in his heart when he speaks and when he legislates.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me say this about this piece of legislation which has been brought by the Democrat leadership before this House. This is an attempt once again to stampede a retreat from Iraq, and it is a gratuitous attempt to do this. There is no reason, only 3½ weeks after the surge of troops has been put in place, to now race for the borders, to demand that the President start to wind up this operation and start to leave, especially when General Petraeus will be making recommendations to us on September 15. There is no reason to do this. And I am reminded of when the surge was first announced and I was on the floor in a discussion with a good colleague from the Democrat side, the day after the surge had been announced when only a few people were even in country from this increase in forces, and she said, There has been a car bombing and that proves the surge doesn't work. And she was ready to immediately start a retreat from the country, and I take it a number of folks on that side of the aisle were willing to do that.

There is no reason to do this. We have an interim report which has just come out. The interim report says that in the 18 areas of interest in which progress has to be registered, there has been progress on eight of them, there has been unsatisfactory progress on eight of them, and on two of them it is too early to really make an evaluation. Well, that is the interim report. And on September 15 we will get a further report.

And as I look at the important things, the things that to me are important in this report, one thing that is very important is the fact that when we needed to get the three additional brigades and that additional troop strength into Baghdad from the Iraqi Army, we got them there. Even though they didn't show up early on 1½ years ago, this time they showed up. Mr. Maliki was good on his commitment. They got there. So things that were important to me with respect to this report are being accomplished.

But the facts are we are only 27 days into this surge. And the Democrat resolution really spells out no plan whatsoever. It asks the President to come up with yet another plan, which is highly interesting since he has a plan and since General Petraeus has stated that he will recommend adjustments on September 15. So if there are adjustments to make to the plan, they should come after General Petraeus appears before us and gives us his recommended adjustments.

So what are we doing here? Well, what we are really doing is counting votes. This is basically an attempt by the Democrat leadership to get a hard vote count, see if any more people have slipped, if there are any more votes on their side of the aisle so that they will be able to tee this thing up and have another vote, hopefully, from their perspective, to forward their goal, which is to start a retreat from Iraq as soon as possible.

There is not a single recommendation in the resolution that is offered by my good friend. There is no recommendation for a new strategy. There is simply a series of questions asked of the administration, and those questions can all best be answered when General Petraeus comes before us.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are two messages that I see coming from Iraq; and we all see in this very complex, very difficult mission lots of messages. A message I saw the other day came from a senior Marine leader. Do you know what it said? It said, ''We are crushing the enemy in Anbar.'' And then a few minutes later, I saw a message from the Democrat leadership that said, ''We have to get out now.'' I have seen the Democrat leadership many times say, We are going to end this war. Mr. Speaker, they don't have the ability to end this war. No American has the ability to end this war. What they do have if they gain enough power is only the ability to leave this battlefield.

Let's not stampede for the border, Mr. Speaker. This is not a time to make a precipitous decision to start ordering the President on a policy that is going to be reported on on September 15. Let's keep our stability. Let's make sure that we don't pass this gratuitous piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, which really is nothing more than a vote count for the Democrat leadership.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation and yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, in Iraq today a misguided war is raging in our country's name. We in this Congress and the American people across the country are filled with admiration for the heroism and sacrifice of our soldiers on the battlefield. But we cannot fathom the mindless stubbornness of the administration fixated on illusory aids. It is pathologically preoccupied with pursuing that despite all the evidence of how destructive the situation has become.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this movie before, quite literally, as any classic film buff knows: ''The Bridge on the River Kwai,'' an Academy Award-winning tale based on real events in World War II. Alec Guinness plays a British colonel mesmerized and hypnotized by the goal of building a bridge that will last through the ages even though doing so will only strengthen the enemy. For a while Alec Guinness persuades his fellow prisoners of war that completing his weird project will leave a legacy of which they can be proud.

But it soon becomes clear that the real goal is to build a monument to himself as he looks back on his few true achievements in life.

At one point this antihero tells his men, We can teach these barbarians a lesson in Western methods and efficiency that will put them to shame. Mr. Speaker, at this point the audience knows where the real shame lies.

The American people know that what happens by our hand in Iraq will be our legacy. We are no longer willing to tolerate keeping our sons and daughters in the midst of a sectarian civil war. The war in Iraq was launched by an administration using faulty intelligence and mesmerized by a dream of some sort of monument to democracy in the Middle East with Iraq at its center. It is past time to stop enabling the construction of this folly.

The legislation before us directs that the redeployment of U.S. forces in Iraq be carried out in a safe and orderly manner. It sets a time certain by which that should start, and it is clearly intended to bring about a major reduction in our troop presence by April of next year. And in the meantime, our legislation will compel the administration to come up with something which amazingly enough to date it hasn't had: a comprehensive strategy for Iraq addressing our national security interests not only there but in the entire region and the ways to maintain our interests even as this redeployment is carried out.

Mr. Speaker, today the administration issued its interim report on the troop escalation in Iraq. Though the White House chooses to focus on the benchmarks that have been met in what it calls a ''satisfactory'' way, the assessment, in fact, shows that Iraq has made unsatisfactory progress on half of the 18 political and military goals that Congress set for Iraq this spring.

The people of Iraq and our fighting forces there know the situation all too well. The index of progress that they face each day tells them much more than a 25-page report can ever say. With every car bomb that takes a civilian toll, every insurgent's bullet that finds its mark, every roadside explosive that maims or kills one of our own brave men and women in uniform, the sacrifices mount; and the result is anything but satisfactory.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, our measure deserves our full and unwavering support. We need to direct a misguided administration to face reality and to start the responsible redeployment of our forces from Iraq. By asking this Congress to extend our patience yet again, by pointlessly risking our troops, and by continuing to ignore the will of the American people to end this war, the administration is reaching for a bridge much too far.

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill, which seeks to impose a strategy of defeat on our Armed Forces and our country. By binding our military and our foreign policy in a straitjacket, this legislation would accomplish what thousands of our enemies have sought: to force the United States to retreat from Iraq without a plan for victory.

Proponents of rapid withdrawal would like us to ignore the reality that Iraq is but one of the critical battlefields in an ongoing war against Islamic jihadists, against global terrorism, a war declared by the jihadists and which saw its beginnings in November 1979, when Iranian radicals stormed our embassy, took Americans hostages, and held them captive for 444 days.

From there Americans, Westerners, innocent human beings were targeted. Where and when were they targeted? In the bombings of the Marine barracks in the U.S. embassy in Beirut in 1983, in the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993, in the bombings of the Khobar Towers in 1996, in the attacks of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and in the attacks on the USS *Cole* in the year 2000.

Proponents of rapid withdrawal want us to look at the bombings in Iraq in a vacuum, disregarding the similarities to the suicide bombers that have killed scores of innocent Israelis, those who planned and carried out the bombings in London, in Madrid, in Bali that claimed so many innocent lives.

□ 1245

These may not be the exact individuals, nor the same groups, but they are part of a global terrorist network working toward the same end, to destroy and to attack us and our allies.

The Islamic jihadists will not stop their agenda of destruction simply because we quickly withdraw from Iraq. They will, perhaps, stop when they see our nations, our cities, our communities burning, just as the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon burned on that terrible day of September 11, 2001.

They have clearly articulated their goals, listen to their words; al Qaeda's second in command, Al Zawahiri, made it clear in May of this year, and I quote him: ''The empire of evil, the United States, is about to end and a new dawn is about to break over mankind, which will be liberated from the caesars of the White House and Europe and from the Zionists.''

Those seeking to impose an immediate withdrawal deadline are so intent on rushing through this legislation that they appear to have failed to consider the consequences of a U.S. national security interest of what euphemistically is being called a ''phased redeployment.''

How is the strategy of quick withdrawal different from the strategy outlined by Al Zawahiri in a letter that he sent to al Qaeda operatives about driving the U.S. out of Iraq? How would we prevent the development of Iraq into a full base of operations for al Qaeda and other terrorist networks? We pretend to be armchair generals, seeking to undermine the strategies called for by our commanders on the field. But we should not.

Some label the current strategy of failure long before this full complement of units had been, in fact, deployed. But those doing the fighting in Iraq know that we have not failed, patriots such as the Parsons brothers from my congressional district.

Huber Parsons was serving his third deployment in Iraq, this time with the Army Stryker Brigade, when his vehicle was struck by a deep buried IED just a few months ago. His driver was killed, and Huber had to undergo a number of surgeries. I had the honor of visiting him often at Walter Reed. He is pictured here saluting his fallen brothers-in-arms at a memorial service in Fort Lewis, Washington. His twin, Bill, and his younger brother, Charlie, are both currently serving in Iraq, also with the Army Stryker Brigade. They, like my stepson, Doug, and my daughter-in-law, Lindsay, and so many others who are currently deployed in Iraq, are disheartened when they hear the references to failure and consider that the talks of this rapid withdrawal shows a lack of confidence in their ability to defeat the enemy.

Many patriots ask me why the Congress would endanger them and their fellow service men and women by having them engage the enemy with an immediately reduced force. Where, in a region of jihadists, are troops to be deployed to? What Middle Eastern government would want to host a retreating and defeated American Army? How does withdrawal to Kuwait or Qatar, as some have proposed, help us fight al Qaeda in Iraq? If al Qaeda strategies worked in Iraq and forced an American retreat, how can we not conclude that they will also pursue them in Kuwait and Qatar and beyond?

Mr. Speaker, George Orwell said that the quickest way of ending a war is to lose it. We should be discussing strategies for victory, not how to ensure our own defeat.

And let me close, Mr. Speaker, by reading the words of General Petraeus in an interview just a few days ago word for word. He said, ''I can think of few commanders in history who wouldn't have wanted more troops, more time or more unity among their partners. However, if I could only have one at this point in Iraq, it would be more time. This is an exceedingly tough endeavor that faces countless challenges.'' General Petraeus continues, None of us, Iraqi or American, are anything but impatient and frustrated at where we are. But there are no shortcuts. Success in an endeavor like this is the result of steady, unremittent pressure over the long haul. It is a test of wills, demanding patience, determination and stamina from all involved.

General Petraeus, as we know, was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate to be our commander in Iraq, yet somehow we have become better war commanders than General Petraeus.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. WEXLER of Florida.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, Mr. LANTOS.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush stubbornly refuses to end the war in Iraq. It is up to Congress to step forward and mandate that our troops return home. Congress must deliver to the American people what they voted for in November. It is Congress that must end this disastrous war. At long last, this legislation delivers a responsible withdrawal of American troops.

The stark reality is that the President's escalation strategy has been an utter failure. Instead of a successful surge, the President's policy in Iraq has regressed, and the death toll of American troops and Iraqi civilians has mounted.

This President is unwilling to change course, despite overwhelming American opposition to the war, despite failing to meet political, economic and security benchmarks, and despite calls by Senate Republicans urging a change in course. The President is in denial, and it is time for Congress to deliver a reality check.

Our troops have sacrificed enough. Our military families have suffered enough. American taxpayers have spent enough. Congress must bring our troops home, and this bill does it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE).

Mr. COBLE. I thank the gentlelady from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against the surge. And for 2½ years, I have said that we need to keep the troop withdrawal issue on the table, but I have also said during that time that the date for withdrawal should be reserved for the commanders on the ground.

The bill before us was not introduced until yesterday, and in my opinion, it is vague, at best; generously laced again, in my opinion, with politics.

I excel at an understatement, Mr. Speaker, when I declare that this war has been mismanaged. It was appropriate to remove Saddam, an international terrorist, but there was never, in my opinion, a post-entry strategy; therefore, mismanagement.

The Iraq issue, Mr. Speaker, is neither as favorable as its proponents contend, nor as unfavorable as its opponents profess. The good news is the evil-driven terrorists have not attacked us again. And I am confident that many moderate Muslims do not embrace the useless killing and destruction of property that has occurred in Iraq, but their silent vocal opposition has been disappointing, at best. The Iraqi Government has been disappointing as well, and we need to insist upon more compliance it seems to me.

But given all the facts surrounding this matter, Mr. Speaker, I believe this Chamber is well-advised to wait until September. We're told that the general will be here in September to report what, if any, favorable or unfavorable results have occurred since the surge, and I believe that is our best policy today.

The cost has been enormous, as has been said, and we would be remiss if we tried to deny that. But I think the right vote is against this proposal today, and then let's revisit it subsequently when the general comes before us in September.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Ambassador DIANE WATSON of California.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you very much, Chairman LANTOS. And thank you, Chairman SKELTON, for crafting this resolution and giving us the opportunity to discuss the war. And I want to thank our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, who has been steadfast in moving this Congress and this country towards an honorable exit from our occupation of Iraq.

We are now 6 months into President Bush's vaunted escalation of the war in Iraq, and we are not seeing progress. Recently, the Washington Post reported that U.S. military commanders are increasingly relying on Sunni militias to fight insurgent groups. Our military officers are giving these militias weapons and intelligence and setting them loose.

Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago, the President told us he needed to escalate the commitment of the United States soldiers to Iraq to disarm ethnic militia. Now, we are arming them? Just a few months ago, the President told us that ethnic militias were undermining the security and stability of Iraq. Now, they are the guarantors of the stability and security of Iraq?

When the President's strategy for victory involves arming the people who, just a few months ago, were our sworn enemies, it becomes difficult for any of us to explain to our constituents what our troops are still doing there in Iraq.

The troops have done their job, and in an honorable way, but they will not be successful if the President cannot decide what the mission really is. And I remember him several years ago saying ''mission accomplished.'' I am sure we will hear from a number of people here that we need to give the escalation more time, that we need to wait until September. I'm not willing to do that, Mr. Speaker. I'm not willing to explain to the families of the soldiers who will die between now and September that it took an extra 3 months to figure out the President's plan, and there has been no strategy given to us for success.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, at this point, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from Texas, Judge POE.

Mr. POE. I want to thank the gentlelady for yielding time on this important issue.

Redeployment. Withdrawal. These words mean the same thing, ''we quit.'' ''Quitting'' Iraq is not a plan. It's not even a strategy; it is a total handoff of responsibility to an unstable government with an ill-prepared military.

I don't dispute that we must do more to ready Iraqis to handle their own security. I do insist, however, that we cannot suddenly leave the Iraqis scrambling to defend their new brand of democracy amidst chaos. That is what this ''leave at any cost'' plan would do: leave our enemies and those of the Iraqi people unfettered and free to pursue their diabolical agenda in Iraq and throughout the world.

So I would like to ask those who want to quit exactly what they plan to do to fight the terrorist operatives in Iraq when our troops turn around and leave. What is the plan?

I would also like to know, who, besides the ''New York Times'', is saying that the fight is lost in Iraq? Reports indicate that our troops are making progress. Sectarian murders in Baghdad have declined in the last 6 months. More Iraqis are coming to American troops with information about the terrorists. And Iraqi citizens are organizing against al Qaeda at the local level. Good for them.

Mr. Speaker, General Patton sailed with his soldiers from Algiers to Italy in World War II, and he said to them, ''No man is beaten until he thinks he is.'' This war is not over unless we quit. And when we quit, we are certainly defeated.

Here is what the defeatists say about the battle. They say that our troops were ill-prepared to go into battle, and there weren't enough of them; that they had inferior equipment; that they had improper uniforms for the extreme weather; U.S. intelligence was flawed; that we underestimated the resolve of the enemy; that Americans and our allies were killed by friendly fire. No, Mr. Speaker, this is not the war in Iraq, but this is the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, a battle that my father fought in. Those Americans, led by General Patton and others, did not run or quit because war is hard. You do not win wars by evacuating. And Americans won the Battle of the Bulge and broke the will of the enemy.

I ask this question: How does this plan to force the United States to withdraw from Iraq differ from al Qaeda's plan to force us to withdraw from Iraq? Why wouldn't al Qaeda celebrate if this bill is passed?

Mr. Speaker, General Patton went on to say to his troops, ''The glory of American arms, the honor of our country, the future of the whole world rests in our individual hands. See to it that you are worthy of this great trust.''

I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that the honor of our country is at stake again today, but that's not all. Our security, the security of Iraqis, and the future of democracy and liberty in the Middle East, all of these are in our hands.

Let us be worthy of this trust. And that's the way it is.

□ 1300

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Member from the State of Washington (Mr. SMITH) of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, in listening to this debate, I think the biggest problem is the proponents of the stay-the-course plan in Iraq continually and completely equate the battle in Iraq with the battle against al Qaeda and the terrorists who struck us. The two are not the same. In fact, we heard from Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN that Iraq is but one of the battlefields that we are fighting against al Qaeda. That is absolutely true. Yet we have 80 percent of our assets in Iraq. Meanwhile, report after report come out that al Qaeda is strengthening themselves in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where we don't have enough resources.

Our argument is not for retreat. Our argument is that there is a better way to fight al Qaeda and those who threaten us than to put all of our assets in Iraq while not paying enough attention to where al Qaeda is really strengthening itself. In Iraq, it is primarily a power struggle in which al Qaeda is a player. It is not primarily about al Qaeda's threat against the U.S. In Afghanistan, with the Taliban and al Qaeda, it is a very different story.

Our troops, our assets, the lives and the talents of the people of this country are tied down in Iraq fighting what is primarily a civil war instead of better fighting al Qaeda. In fact, our presence, in many ways, has strengthened al Qaeda. Syria would never be an ally of al Qaeda in any sort of real-world scenario, because al Qaeda wants to topple their regime. Yet to defeat us in Iraq, they have come up with an alliance of convenience.

There is a better way to fight al Qaeda. We are here today to change course in Iraq because it is a better way to protect this country. Timing isn't the issue. Six months ago, these facts were basically the same as they are today. In September, these facts will be basically the same as they are today. We cannot wait if we are going to have the best possible strategy for defeating al Qaeda, the group that threatens us most, instead of getting bogged down in the civil war and in the tribal differences that are present in Iraq. We want to win, not to quit. This is the better way to do it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE), the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

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

Mr. PENCE. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman and my good friend from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we are come to this floor today, it seems to me, in an important moment in the life of two nations. We are come to this floor at a time when our colleagues in the other body are debating a Defense authorization bill and will be considering amendments about a new course in Iraq.

So I do not question the decision of the majority in this chamber to consider these same issues, particularly in light of the release of the initial benchmark assessment report by our military and diplomatic leadership in Iraq. It is a report, I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that is to me frustrating, as it is, I think, to Members on both sides of this aisle. Of 18 benchmarks included in the interim report to Congress, progress on eight of the benchmarks has been characterized as satisfactory, but progress on another eight are unsatisfactory, with it being too early to tell on another two.

Two months from now, the Crocker-Petraeus report that Congress has been promised will provide, we believe, a broader assessment. But, frankly, I am struggling, as a strong supporter of our effort in Iraq, with the failure of this Iraqi Government to step forward with progress toward enacting legislation on de-Ba'athification reform, hydrocarbon resources reform, and the scheduling of and planning of provincial elections.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be transparent about that frustration as much as I was when I met with Iraqi cabinet officials just a short 2 months ago. The Iraqi Government must do more. If there is any unintended benefit of this debate today, my hope is that some of this debate with that message would echo to those people.

But that being said, I will oppose this measure, Mr. Speaker, because I truly believe that defeat and an American failure in Iraq is not an option that we can consider.

With great respect to my colleagues who would endorse this proposal for a precipitous American withdrawal from Iraq by April 1 of next year, I truly believe that, before we make any decision adjusting our strategy on the ground, we ought to wait to hear from those Americans on the ground in Iraq who have been charged with implementing the strategy the President put into effect in January.

I want to reiterate, and I think I speak for many Republicans, Mr. Speaker, as the President said in January, our commitment to this Iraqi Government is not open-ended. But my commitment to an American and Iraqi success is deep and heartfelt. Whether this Iraqi Government can rise to that challenge or not, as the gentleman from Indiana in the other body said, we must find a way to forge agreement to achieve success in Iraq.

The good news of the assessment that has come before the Congress is that we have been achieving some progress as a result of the President's surge strategy on the ground. Between May and June, 26 high-level al Qaeda leaders have been killed or captured.

I know there are some, even the gentleman who just spoke, who questioned whether we are fighting al Qaeda in Iraq. Our soldiers don't question that. Eleven of those al Qaeda leaders killed or captured were emirs, local al Qaeda leaders; seven were facilitators who smuggled foreign weapons; and five were cell leaders who commanded terrorist units.

U.S. operations in the last 2 months, according to the reports released this week, have also uncovered an al Qaeda media network in a nondescript facility outside Samarra. U.S. forces also, I am happy to report, received 23,000 tips during this period of time, which is four to five times the number of tips we were receiving last year.

But, again, that goes against the backdrop of disappointing news. While the American soldier performs with courage and effectiveness, the Iraqi government still fails to demonstrate the urgency.

So as I struggle, I would just ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who share my concerns about the lack of progress in Iraq, as to this solution you bring to the floor, how will your plan for a unilateral withdrawal keep American soldiers safe?

We have 160,000 soldiers there now. The majority of this Congress would call for them to exit Iraq by April 1. Well, in effect it would take 3,000 large convoys, according to some press reports, to evacuate the country down the one road out through Basra and into Kuwait.

Also I would ask, how would this plan for unilateral withdrawal decrease the number of terrorist safe havens in that country? And since al Qaeda is clearly in Iraq, how would the plan for unilateral withdrawal succeed in fighting al Qaeda in Iraq?

Lastly, I say as the ranking member of the Middle East Subcommittee, how will a withdrawal, a precipitous, reckless, irresponsible withdrawal, make the Middle East safer and more stable?

I fear if we lose Iraq, we will lose Israel. We must come together as a Nation to find a way forward to succeed in Iraq.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman, my distinguished friend, the chairman, for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to get our troops out of the middle of an Iraqi civil war. It's time to start bringing our troops home.

My friends on the other side of the aisle are essentially saying ''stay the course.'' At what point, I would ask my friends, do we say that the administration's policies in Iraq have failed and it is time to change course? I think that time is now.

Even the Bush administration's interim assessment of whether the Iraqis are meeting basic benchmarks shows that they have failed to achieve any level of political and economic success. Here we are in the fifth year of the war, longer than World War II, more than half a trillion dollars and 3,600 American lives lost, and Iraqi politicians seem further apart than ever. Indeed, the evidence that our soldiers are involved in an Iraqi civil war is mounting and a solution seems even further from our grasp.

Young American service personnel cannot solve the problem of Iraq, because, ultimately, Iraq is not a military problem anymore; it is a political crisis. And if the Iraqis cannot solve their political problems, we cannot do it for them. Only Iraqi politicians can bring about a solution, and our military personnel should not be dying to hold together the collapsed Iraqi state.

Mr. Speaker, this war has turned into a great strategic fiasco, from the lack of planning to insufficient number of troops, to incompetent management of reconstruction projects, to the use of torture in military prisons. Our blunder in Iraq will affect our ability to succeed in the Middle East and elsewhere for years to come.

Therefore, I strongly support this bill, which requires that we begin redeploying American troops home within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of our Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

You know, the things that are being said today, if George Washington had had television and radio and newspapers, would have been said about him. Several of his generals wanted him out because he wasn't winning battles and things were going wrong. Even in the Congress of the United States, Lee of Virginia led the charge to try to get rid of George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

Abraham Lincoln, McClellan, one of his chief generals, who wouldn't fight, ran against him for President, and Lincoln was going to be defeated if Sherman hadn't taken Atlanta.

War is not a popular thing. It's a horrible thing. Chairman LANTOS was a survivor of the camps during the Holocaust during World War II. I would like to ask you a question: What would have happened if we hadn't won that war? How many more Jewish people would have been killed in those camps? Millions more. Six million died, but many millions more probably would have died if Hitler had prevailed. But we had Winston Churchill, who was willing to go to the mat to make sure that they didn't win and that he was going to defeat Hitler.

If we pull out unilaterally like they're talking about right now, we leave those people over there who voted and held their fingers up, we leave those people to their fate with these people who are radicals, who are going to take over.

Iran has camps. Senator LIEBERMAN talked about that. They have training camps right there along the border. They are sending terrorists in to help augment the terrorists in Iraq. And if we unilaterally pull out, just like you're talking about, those people who voted for freedom and democracy, many, many, many of those will die, maybe even more than who have been dying in Darfur, and you have been talking about how important it is that we do something in Darfur.

□ 1315

A vacuum will be created, and Iran will fill it. They will not stop their nuclear development program, and we will be imperiled down the road from their nuclear development program because they'll have a real jumping-off point throughout the Middle East, not just in Iran but in Iraq and possibly Afghanistan, if many of you have your way.

I don't know why we're not waiting on General Petraeus' report. We just gave him authority and gave him the money to pursue this until he reports back in September. I don't understand why we're jumping the gun and trying to force withdrawal right now when General Petraeus, who talked to all of us, has not had a chance to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, 61 million people died in World War II, 6 million Jews; 61 million. In this nuclear age, if we pull in our horns and let Iran run wild over there, which they will, and they develop their nuclear program, how many millions could die in this country as well as around the world? I submit it probably would be more than 61 million.

In the United States, if we pull out like you're talking about, we'll probably have to go back in to stop them from developing that nuclear capability and stop them from training these people to go in and terrorize not only Iran and also Iraq and other places in the Middle East. That is a tinderbox over there and we have to make the right decision.

Every President who has been in a war has been criticized by Congress at one time or another. Every single President, unless it was a very short war where you were in for 5 or 6 days or a couple of months. This is no exception.

Have mistakes been made? You bet. Were mistakes made in World War II? Eight hundred guys drowned in a mock Normandy invasion off the coast of England. If we had television then and the newspapers we have today, we would never have invaded Normandy because they would have stopped it just like that because of criticism of those 800 guys drowning to death. They would have said it wouldn't have worked; it wasn't feasible.

This is a very, very important issue we are talking about. Our brave soldiers are doing their job over there. And they watch on television right now, and what are they hearing? Pull out, pull out, pull out. They are asking, What are we fighting for if the Congress is going to jerk us out right now? We have heard from a lot of them who say, hey, we're doing the job, and we're doing better right now.

I just think we ought to think very long and hard about what we're doing. It could effect a world war. We're in a world war against al Qaeda right now, but it could be a much more devastating war if we don't make the right decisions. I would like to say to my colleagues that I think it's extremely important that you think long and hard about what you're trying to do. Nobody likes war. Nobody likes war.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to our distinguished colleague from Texas, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. GREEN.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing me to speak.

Before I get into my prepared remarks, part of the resolution, if my colleagues would go to page 5 of the resolution, says as part of the justification required, the President shall, at a minimum, address whether it is necessary for the Armed Forces to carry out the following missions: protecting U.S. diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens, including Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions; serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions; but also, engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations in Iraq.

So while I sat here on the floor listened and heard, ''we are bailing out of attacking al Qaeda,'' we are not doing that. This resolution says we will still be there. The President has to certify, though, that is what we are doing. We are not shoring up the Iraqi Government; we are fighting al Qaeda, who brought us September 11. So anybody who says we are leaving is just wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution and this legislation, and thank Chairman SKELTON for his work on the bill. Like Chairman SKELTON, I want to thank our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and their families who are serving our country.

I have stated before, we must let the Iraqi Government know our commitment is not open-ended. I have not supported efforts for immediate withdrawal, but this bill, just like our first supplemental sent to the President, which he vetoed, lets the Iraqi Government know that they need to make some tough choices to stabilize their country within the next several months.

It also gives our administration time to have a comprehensive strategy in Iraq, and allows the troops to remain to protect our diplomatic facilities and fight al Qaeda, and training and equipping the Iraqi security forces.

As this legislation states, we give the President the authority to use the Armed Forces to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by the Iraqi government at that time. But we won that battle. The government was removed. The power and its leader indicted, tried and convicted, and executed by the newly elected, now-democratic government of Iraq.

This bill will bring our troops home by April 1 of next year—that will be more than 5 years since the war began. U.S. taxpayers have spent billions of dollars, and thousands of troops have given their lives to bring security and stability to Iraq.

While the current Iraqi government has been organizing and security forces have been training, our forces have been responsible for every facet of security in Iraq. Our troops defeated Saddam's Army, worked to control the country, policed Iraq's streets, protected the transitional and elected governments, and trained Iraq security forces.

Our military has given the Iraqi government, the Iraqi security forces, and the Iraqi people every opportunity to have a stable, democratic country. It is time to let the Iraqi people know that 5 years is long enough—they must take responsibility for the future of their country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill to bring our troops home in a safe, responsible timeframe.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, before I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. INGLIS) who has traveled to Iraq several times, I yield myself a minute to answer some questions posed on the other side of the aisle.

What we have here is a nonspecific, nondetailed, nothing planned for victory. The bill on page 3, since the gentleman refers to the bill, let's look at it. It talks about a reduction, a transition, a limited presence, a limited presence, again, with maximum attention paid to the protection of our Armed Forces. What does that mean? So you want our troops to face the terrorists with even less protection?

It shall be further implemented as part of a comprehensive strategy. What do these phrases mean? What would General Petraeus do if this legislation were to become law, which it will not? This is not a plan. It says nothing. It is making a political statement.

I am pleased to yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. INGLIS) who has been to Iraq and understands the situation well.

Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we have a huge challenge in Iraq. It is a challenge for Democrats. It is a challenge for Republicans. It is a challenge for the President and for the Congress. We need an American solution to that challenge. The question before us today is whether this resolution is going to advance that solution or it is actually going to make it more difficult.

I am one of the 17 Republicans that wasn't convinced of the surge; but I am aware now that we are doing it. It is underway, and the plan is clear to have General Petraeus report in September.

I am not certain why it is that we should be debating today a resolution prior to that time because, between now and then, rather than having a succession of political kind of resolutions, we could be working toward an American consensus on this. I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that that consensus is not that far away. I think we can start with two very clear observations. First, our military has done exactly what we have asked them to do. And they have done it very well.

Second, we need to use the American concept of accountability. We need to impose accountability on the Iraqi regime and say to them, we have these benchmarks and here are some rewards for success and some consequences for failure.

And between now and September 30, if we work in a cooperative way, I think we can find a whole series of success check points that we can lay out for the regime in Baghdad. We can say to them, Republicans, Democrats, the President and Congress alike, can say to them, here are the things that we want you to accomplish, and we have the right to insist that you accomplish them because after all, we are spending $2 billion a week. But even more important than that, far more important than that, we have American lives at risk. So we have the right as their protectors. We want you to achieve these things. If you do, you get these rewards. If you fail, these are the consequences. We can lay out a whole series of those if we work together in a cooperative way. The President, the Congress, Republicans and Democrats, we can come up with that American solution and we can find a way forward in Iraq.

The question that I think the proponents of this resolution need to answer is, if you simply set the withdrawal date of April 1, what went with all of that accountability? What went with all of those success check points? The question really for the proponents is: How do you know by April 1, such a date in stone, that you will have succeeded? Why not work cooperatively between now and September, awaiting the report, to prepare a series of very carefully thought out success check points with consequences for failure and rewards for success? And think through the plan. As it is, I think there is not much of a plan; and, therefore, I will vote against the resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my colleague from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman LANTOS for the time and Chairman SKELTON for bringing this important resolution to the House floor.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have called for bold action to bring our troops home, and today we are debating a first step, setting a date certain to bring them home.

Over the next weeks, we will vote to prohibit permanent bases in Iraq. We will continue the drumbeat to fund the safe and complete withdrawal of our troops.

But, Mr. Speaker, despite calls—no, actually pleas—from the American people, some at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue and many right here in the House are just fine with staying the course. In fact, they are once again changing the conversation. They are trying to focus on gut feelings about an upcoming terrorist attack. But the American people will not stand for changing the conversation, and they will not stand for staying the course, nor should we in this Congress.

The costs are just too high: $10 billion a month, and worst of all, the deadliest 3-month period since the escalation; 3,600 troops dead; at least 26,000 wounded; and tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees leaving Iraq every day. This is not only unacceptable; it is immoral.

Today, the Congress must take a bold step to bring our troops home. We must stand up today with the American people. We must say, enough is enough. End the occupation, bring our troops home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL), a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding me this time.

Here we are once again. I feel like we have done this before. Once again, I rise in opposition to the Democratic leadership's latest attempt to politicize the war, and I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote against defeat in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, the debate in this Chamber over the future of Iraq and the best course of action has been passionate and divisive, and each Member of this House has their own opinion. Yet the one thing we should be united on is our end goal and result. That should be the same: a democratic and stable Iraq.

The Democratic majority has chosen to use this month of July, as they have

attempted several times already this year, to hold a series of votes to withdrawal our troops and force a premature end to Iraq's pursuit of freedom and democracy.

We have to ask: What would happen if we withdrawal immediately? When we talk to the experts in the region, the leaders in these governments and key stakeholders in the region, they will tell you it will be a fireball in the Middle East. It will create a vacuum, a safe haven for al Qaeda. Iran will swoop in and take over. They, the key nations in the region, are quite frankly terrified of this action, and they tell us that privately.

I believe that we can cannot afford that course of action. The Democrats have chosen this course not because it is in the national interest of this country but rather because they believe it provides them with good talking points to use back home. I submit they are mistaken.

In my view, Americans are tired and frustrated with the partisan squabbling over the war which has done nothing to improve the situation in Iraq. Putting politics above our national interest while the men and women of our military are fighting overseas is simply unacceptable.

□ 1330

In a time of war, politics should end at the water's edge.

There is another way forward. I and others have introduced the Iraq Study Group recommendations Implementation Act of 2007. This legislation is bipartisan. It is a comprehensive set of recommendations, a plan of action to succeed in Iraq, a plan which matches our military might with political solutions, with economic solutions and with a diplomatic surge which can bring peace and stability to the troubled nation. This bill has gained strength by those who recognize that moving forward in a unified way still exists in the Congress.

The Iraq Study Group report offers a consensus policy that the vast majority of Americans support. The sponsors of the Democrat withdrawal bill that we are debating here today, however, have decided that even though the surge only came into effect 3 weeks ago, that it's already failed and we need to question it and throw it out.

They further decided that we should declare defeat immediately and not wait for General Petraeus to come to Congress and give us his firsthand report. This rush to judgment, this rush to action on their part makes it clear that they have not reached an informed decision but, rather, a political one.

Throughout the course of our American history, we've answered the call for freedom, and we, Mr. Speaker, I submit are at our greatest when we are united as a Nation; at our worst when we are divided.

We should unite behind the ideals which helped achieve victory against the threats to our very way of life, such as the victories against the Third Reich, such as the threats by the Soviet empire and the victory against the Soviet Union.

Today, the greatest threat is the threat of terrorism, and the conflict in Iraq poses one of the greatest challenges to the American experience. We must unite, or we will surely fail.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2½ minutes to a distinguished colleague from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing members of that committee to show their commitment through their legislative work in a hearing at the early stages of his leadership when we were allowed to present solutions. They were not Republican solutions or Democratic solutions. They were solutions for those of us who love America, and I just want to simply reinforce that. I thank Mr. SKELTON for his leadership.

I have legislation that declares a military success, and I rise today to make it clear that I believe that the fallen in battle are heroes, and those who still fight carry their banner, for 3,611 have died, and I don't know why we're not on this floor declaring a military victory, thanking our soldiers.

And my good friend from Texas says that he supports the Iraq Study Group. So do I and I have legislation. We all have legislation that responds to the Iraq Study Group. I might remind him that that report, bipartisan report, speaks articulately to redeployment, and so when we look at the costs of the war, $120 billion, Americans are asking, should one more drop of blood be shed? And my answer to that is, no. Should we engage? Yes. Should we involve in the surge of diplomacy? Absolutely.

We want to make sure that all of those nation states can work to help solve the divide, the civil war. But we must face the facts that this process that the President is continuing to repeat does not work. It is wracked with corruption and misdirection. There were no weapons of mass destruction.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I have been disturbed this whole week as I listened to the Secretary of Homeland Security speak about his gut feeling of the possibility of a terrorist attack. I'm a member of that committee. I live every day with the idea that the question will be asked by Americans to the Homeland Security Committee and the Homeland Security Department, does the Secretary realize that we have fueled the fires of terrorism by training terrorists in this war.

And so when I speak of why we must end, it is to save lives. It is to reconcile Iraq, and it is to make America safer. I ask for support of the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act. I rise in strong support of this legislation because I am listening, and responding to the will of the American people. Last November 2006, Americans went to polls by the millions united in their resolve to vote for change. They voted for a new direction and a change in the Bush administration's disastrous policy in Iraq. The new Democratic majority heard them and responded by passing H.R. 1591, the Iraq Accountability Act. The President vetoed the bill, demanding instead a continuation of the ancien régime under which the Republican-led Congress gave him a blank check to mismanage the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq.

Those days are over. No matter how many veto threats the President issues, this Congress is not going to give him a blank check to escalate and continue the war ad infinitum. It is long past time for change in Iraq. It is time for the people and Government of Iraq to take primary responsibility for their own country. It is time for the President to recognize the reality on the ground in Iraq. The time when a surge in troops is useful and necessary is past. It is now time to redeploy our troops and launch a diplomatic surge for national and political reconciliation in Iraq. H.R. 2956 will help achieve this goal and that is why I support the measure.

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 which agitates the passions of all Americans, including Members of Congress. The Framers understood that while the military does the fighting, a nation goes to war. That is why the Framers lodged the power to declare war in the Congress, the branch of Government closest to the people. They knew that the decision to go to war was too important to be left to the whim of a single person, no matter how wise or well-informed he or she might be.

Four years ago, President Bush stood under a banner that proclaimed "Mission Accomplished." If the mission was to further place our troops in harm's way at the hands of insurgents and sectarian violence, then it is mission accomplished. After spending more than $450 billion sacrificing the lives of 3,611 of America's finest citizen-soldiers, what have we accomplished and where are we headed?

I cannot support the President's waging of a war that has no clear direction, does not meet the benchmarks that the President set, and has no visible target.

Four years after launching the invasion, conquest, and occupation of Iraq, the evidence is clear and irrefutable: The preemptive invasion of Iraq, while a spectacularly executed military operation, was a strategic blunder without parallel in the history of American foreign policy. This is what can happen when the Congress allows itself to be stampeded into authorizing a president to launch a preemptive war of choice.

It is time to change our strategy in Iraq. It is time to engage the key stakeholders in the Middle East and make real strides towards securing a just and lasting peace in Iraq and for the Iraqi people. And most important, bring our troops home so they can be reunited with their families, friends, and neighbors.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 2956. The Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act requires a responsible redeployment of U.S. troops beginning within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008. The legislation requires the President to publicly justify the post-redeployment missions for the U.S. military in Iraq and the minimum number of troops necessary to carry out those missions.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is consistent with the advice of military and foreign policy experts, ensures the safety of our men and women in uniform, addresses our commitment to fighting terrorism, and reflects the will of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, the need for a new direction in Iraq could not be clearer. In the face of mounting evidence that progress is not being made in Iraq, military leaders, defense experts, Republican and Democratic Members of Congress, and the American people are demanding change. Yet the President continues to urge continued support for a failed policy that is not making America safer or supporting our troops.

In a report released today by the White House, the administration concedes that violence continues in Iraq and that the Iraqi Government has failed to meet key benchmarks endorsed by the President in January and political reconciliation is nonexistent. By the Bush administration's own admission, there is unsatisfactory progress on all of the political reconciliation benchmarks announced by the President on January 10, 2007.

In fact, just this week, the National Security Network reported that since the President announced his ''surge'' policy 6 months ago, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, approximately 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush and Vice President CHENEY have been given numerous chances and ample time by the American people and the Congress to straighten out the mess in Iraq. They have failed. It is little wonder that the criticism of the administration's failed policy in Iraq is mounting by the day. Respected military leaders, like LTG William Odom, have spoken forcefully. According to Lieutenant General Odom, ''No effective new strategy can be devised for the United States until it begins withdrawing its forces from Iraq. Only that step will break the paralysis that now confronts us.''

Key Republican Senators are joining the chorus of critics. In addition to Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Senator RICHARD LUGAR, some of the President's allies in Congress have spoken out. Senator PETE DOMENICI says, ''There's no reason to wait . . . [I am] trying to tell [Bush] that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.'' Senator ELIZABETH DOLE says, ''It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008.'' Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER says, ''The President needs a new strategy.''

And just this week, in a USA Today/Gallup Poll, more than 70 percent of Americans favor removal of almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 2008, leaving a limited number for counterterrorism efforts.

MILITARY SUCCESS IN IRAQ ACT

Finally Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation because it is grounded in the fundamental principles I first announced in February of this year when I introduced H.R. 930, the Military Success in Iraq and Diplomatic Surge for National and Political Reconciliation in Iraq Act of 2007. I introduced this legislation, the Military Success in Iraq Act of 2007, MSIA or ''Messiah,'' to offer an honorable deliverance from Iraq. Let me explain.

In October 2002, the 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.

Every one of these objectives has long been accomplished. Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein has been deposed, captured, and dealt with by the Iraqi people. The American military has caught or killed virtually every member of al Qaeda in Iraq that was even 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.

Mr. Speaker, since the objectives which led Congress to pass the 2002 Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) have been achieved, I believe the authorization to use that military force expires automatically. My legislation affirms this proposition. Additionally, I believe, and my legislation provides, that it is the Congress that is the ultimate arbiter as to whether the objectives set forth in a congressional AUMF have been achieved.

Mr. Speaker, where a Congressional authorization to use military force has expired, the President must obtain a new authorization to continue the use force. My legislation requires the President to do that as well. Finally, my bill requires that if the Congress does not vote to reauthorize the use of force in Iraq within 90 days after determining that the objectives set forth in the 2002 AUMF have been achieved, all American armed forces in Iraq must be redeployed out of Iraq. Thus, under my legislation, an up-or-down vote must be held by the House and Senate to continue waging war in Iraq.

I am not talking about ''cutting and running,'' or surrendering to terrorists. And I certainly am not talking about staying in Iraq forever or the foreseeable future. The Armed Forces won the war they were sent to fight. Their civilian leadership has not succeeded in winning the peace. That is why the United States should surge diplomatically and politically.

Title II of my legislation, the ''Diplomatic Surge for Political and National Reconciliation in Iraq Act,'' implements twelve of the most important recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. This approach is now gaining widespread support among many who had previously disparaged diplomacy in favor of military force.

All six of Iraq's neighbors—Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait—have an interest in a stabilized Iraq because as the Iraq Study Group report makes clear, none of these countries wants to live with an Iraq that, after our redeployment, becomes a failed state or a humanitarian catastrophe that could become a haven for terrorists or hemorrhages millions more refugees who will stream into neighboring countries.

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.

Mr. Speaker, everyday when I walk into my office I am reminded of the courageous young men and women who have given their lives in service to our nation. Outside my office I have displayed a poster-board that displays the names and faces of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. The poster-board is nearly full. I do not want to start another board. Let me call the roll of honor of the remarkable sons and daughters of Houston, Texas who have made the ultimate sacrifice and gave the last full measure of devotion: Capt. Eric L. Allton, Petty Officer 1st Class Howard E. Babcock IV, Spec. Adolfo C. Carballo, Staff Sgt. Brian T. Craig, Staff Sgt. Terrence D. Dunn, Pfc. Analaura Esparza Gutierrez, 1st Lt. David M. Fraser, Lance Cpl. Phillip C. George, Spec. Clinton R. Gertson, Capt. Andrew R. Houghton, Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak, Spec. John P. Johnson, Pfc. Roy L. Jones III, Cpl. Brian M. Kennedy, Staff Sgt. Dexter S. Kimble,

Spec. Scott Q. Larson Jr., Staff Sgt. Hector Leija, Pfc. Jesus A. Leon-Perez, Sgt. Keelan L. Moss, Tech. Sgt. Walter M. Moss Jr., Staff Sgt. Kenneth I. Pugh, Staff Sgt. William D. Richardson, Staff Sgt. Timothy J. Roark, Sgt. Michael T. Robertson, Cpl. Benjamin S. Rosales, Staff Sgt. Alberto V. Sanchez, Pfc. Leroy Sandoval Jr., Pfc. Armando Soriano, Cpl. Tomas Sotelo Jr., Sgt. Danny R. Soto, Spec. Juan M. Torres, Lance Cpl. Thomas J. Zapp.

Mr. Speaker, the misguided, mismanaged, and costly debacle that is the Iraq War which was preemptively launched by President Bush in March 2003 despite the opposition of me and 125 of my colleagues in the House of Representatives has lasted longer than America's involvement in World War II, the greatest conflict in all of human history.

But there is a difference. The Second World War ended in complete and total victory for the United States and its allies. But then again, in that conflict America was led by FDR, a great Commander-in-Chief, who had a plan to win the war and secure the peace, listened to his generals, and sent troops in sufficient numbers and sufficiently trained and equipped to do the job.

My friends, I say with sadness that we have not enjoyed that same quality of leadership

throughout the conduct of the Iraq War. The results, not surprisingly, have been disastrous. To date, the war in Iraq has claimed the lives of 3,611 brave servicemen and women. The last three months of the war have been among the deadliest (104 in April, 123 in May, 101 in June, and 32 in the first week of July). More than 26,690 Americans have been wounded, many suffering the most horrific injuries. American taxpayers have paid nearly $450 billion to sustain this misadventure. To grasp the magnitude of this number, consider that American taxpayers are spending: $120,000,000,000 per year; $10,000,000,000 per month; $2,307,692,380 per week; $329,670,330 per day; $13,736,264 per hour; $228,938 per minute; $3,816 per second.

Mr. Speaker, last November the American people signaled clearly their loss of confidence in the President's leadership and their desire for a new direction in Iraq. The new Democratic majority has begun to deliver. And we will not rest, Mr. Speaker, until we are clearly on a glide path to the day when our troops come home.

And even then our work will not be done. We must still be about the business of repairing the damage to America's international reputation and prestige. But this Democratic majority, led by the Progressive Caucus and the Out of Iraq Caucus, has ushered in a new era of oversight, accountability, and transparency to defense and reconstruction contracting and procurement.

I urge all members to join me in supporting H.R. 2956. This is the best way to ensure accountability to our soldiers who have been sent into battle without proper training or equipment or a clear mission. It is the best way to keep faith with our veterans who are not getting the best medical care when they come home. Passing this legislation is essential to restoring our military that is being stretched to the limits by the Bush policy. Last, it is absolutely necessary to regain the confidence of the American people who demand a new direction in Iraq.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume because I'd like to comment on a point that was raised by my good friend from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) regarding the intentions of Iran.

The deputy interior minister for security affairs and the former deputy head of the Revolutionary Guards in Iran said on April 26 of this year, ''Iran has long-range missiles that can make nowhere safe for America.''

He also said, ''Iran is able to fire tens of thousands of missiles per day at American targets on a daily basis and, with its long-range missiles, can threaten Israel which is acting as America's'' proxy.

So it is clear to us, Mr. Speaker, that Iran seeks not just to wipe Israel off the map, as Ahmadinejad has said time and again, but to destroy the United States. So is the plan to immediately leave Iraq so that Iran can begin its takeover of the region? Is this in the national security interests of the United States? Is that going to make us safer?

I think that we should carefully consider what will happen were we to withdraw immediately as, it has been called for.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, H.R. 2956, and for the safe redeployment of our combat troops out of Iraq.

I thank our Chairman LANTOS of the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding time to me and want to reiterate that for 4 years now our administration has sacrificed its many soldiers for an Iraqi Government that has failed to take responsibility for its own security. While many of these soldiers have made great sacrifices on our Nation's behalf, the President has failed to support them with a viable strategy to succeed in Iraq and then to end combat operations.

This bill would force the President to be accountable to this Congress and to the American people. Yes, the American people deserve to know how this war is conducted and how it will end.

This bill would force the Iraqi Government to realize that America's commitment to their nation is not openended and that they must be accountable to their people for security and stability.

This bill would allow our military to safely redeploy from combat in Iraq to better confront emerging security threats around the world.

This bill would end the drain upon our Nation's resources that could better be used on our priorities at home such as improving our homeland security, strengthening our economy, and for providing for our citizens.

I strongly support this important legislation and request the President heed the call of this Congress to support our troops by redeploying them out of Iraq.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE).

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her yielding and for her work on the issue and thank the majority party for their work. We're involved in a very serious discussion here.

I was in the Air Force in 1970, in Reese Air Force Base in Texas in pilot training, and the Shah of Iran's son was in the class right behind me. I didn't know much about the Shah of Iran, coming from Hobbs, New Mexico, but we began to watch and began to visualize as he left training, and those Iranians who were in the training class with me left and went back home to Iran, what their life was like flying jets in the Middle East. And then in 1979, the Shah was suddenly out of power, just like that. The ayatollah came to power and instituted a tremendous repressive regime that continues to this day.

Now, the question that our friends on the other side of the aisle fail to ask is what is their plan to see that our friends in the Middle East have stability because, in fact, they're balancing the terrorists in their own countries every day. They're balancing them using our force and our will and our promise to help.

So what do our friends in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, what do they do? When I went to Israel earlier this year, Israel simply said they fall. If you leave Iraq, those nations fall.

Now, it's an uncomfortable truth, but somehow we're not going to talk about some uncomfortable truth these days. It's an uncomfortable truth that the entire Middle East is facing a problem of stability. If the entire Middle East faces a problem with stability, the entire world has a problem of stability because, if the Middle East exports about 25 to 30 percent of the world's oil, which it does, then the world oil market becomes destabilized, the world economy becomes destabilized, and in the end, the terrorists win because they have destabilized the world rather than defeat any of the forces in the world. That's been their long-term plan, to export instability, and they have been doing a very good job of it.

Now, the President after 9/11 said we're going to fight a war on terror that simply does three things: we're going to take away the training camps, we're going to choke off their funding, and we're going to take the fight to them. Now, you can agree or disagree that Iraq is a place of combat with the terrorists, but it looks like to me that the terrorists from all over the world are coming in there. Iran is providing terrorists and weapons, Syria, other nations; and so whether or not it appears that the war is there, our soldiers believe that they're actually fighting al Qaeda.

So the President's plan has definitely uprooted the training camps. We've begun to squeeze off the funding to the al Qaeda troops, to the terrorists worldwide, and we have taken the fight to them. But now then, when we retreat, when we come home, the question that has failed to be asked by our friends who have this resolution calling our troops home, it fails to ask what do we do for world stability at that point. It is a serious omission. It's not accidental.

I appreciate the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee who serves with great distinction as vice chair of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation and Trade, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I stand 100 percent behind this bill for a responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq. Much has been said. There are several points I would like to make going forward.

First of all, this is responsible. This is not something that was just put together. This was put together with military advisers of the first order, generals on the ground who were consulted, and by two of the most distinguished individuals in this Chamber, our distinguished chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. TOM LANTOS, and our distinguished chairman of our Armed Services Committee, Mr. IKE SKELTON. Nobody can argue their credentials. Nobody can argue the credentials of the military advisers that put this together.

But most importantly, the people that no one has mentioned, the entity that no one has mentioned, the most important entity of all is the American people. This bill represents the will of the American people. Seventy percent of the American people support this action today.

Now, let me remind you of the words of Robert Jackson, one of our distinguished Supreme Court Justices in the steel seizure case of 1952, when a similar situation was in place, where we were at loggerheads then with the executive branch and the legislative branch, but at that point, the Supreme Court decided that Congress has the authority. And Jackson went on to say that when the executive branch denies, disrespects and disavows the authority of Congress, we enter into what is referred to as a zone of twilight, or a twilight zone.

□ 1345

That's where we are now, to get out of this twilight zone of destruction and mayhem, of instability in the Middle East. You talk about stability in the Middle East. We are more unstable in the Middle East now as a result of what we have done.

Get us out of this twilight zone. This bill is the way to do it, and I commend it and hope we pass it overwhelmingly.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Generals on the ground were consulted on this bill? Seventy percent of Americans support this bill, support immediate withdrawal of our troops?

This bill before us is nothing more than political hyperbole, partisan politics using our troops as cover, because the American people don't have this bill in front of them. We didn't have this bill before us until just a few hours ago.

Let me show you exactly what the Democratic leadership has scheduled for us to debate, and I use the term lightly. For an entire day, rather than do the hard work of our Congress that we need to do to have more serious discussions on Iraq, on this bill, on appropriations, it's six pages long, six pages long.

It was introduced yesterday, so I don't know what commanders on the field we consulted with. I would be interested in doing that, in finding that out. The first page is the title. The second page, it's a ''sense of Congress,'' language, nonbinding. The third page says ''reduce forces to limited presence.'' Who understands what that is? Certainly not the drafters of this bill. The fourth and the fifth page calls for a strategy.

Yet this Congress already has demanded a strategy from the President, and it is due in September, a report. That's what the Democrats say they have asked for. But yet they are not willing to wait for that report.

The last page is definitions. This is what we are debating today, Democratic politics using our troops as pawns. Commanders on the field who were consulted? Give me a break.

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

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my friend and colleague from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Now, certainly this measure is part of an ongoing effort to try to bring comprehensive change. We do have a vested interest in the Middle East as we are engaged in this war on terror throughout the world.

Notwithstanding that fact, though, for 6 years, our administration has had a blank check in Iraq, and that war on terror, and unfortunately, I think, by any critical evaluation, at best it has been bungled. At worst, we have made a mess of things. The previous Congresses have left little to be desired in terms of real oversight.

With unlimited resources, we have complicated our relations with the Middle East, and it's unfortunate for our country. It seems for every step forward, we take a step back. This legislation, then again, is another effort to begin a new direction, which will protect our interests in the Middle East and begin to develop a plan to bring our troops home.

What is lacking in this legislation though is a requirement for the President to tell us how we are going to, in fact, stabilize the areas with all the diplomatic resources available to us and our allies throughout the world in this region. Nonetheless, under the current circumstances, this legislation, I believe, is the next logical step. Clearly, doing more of the same continues to risk precious lives of American men and women in uniform, not to mention our Treasury, with little responsiveness, unfortunately and cooperation from the Iraqi Government.

Hopefully, this legislation will allow the administration to engage and work with us for constructive change that the American people demands.

I ask for an ''aye'' vote.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank you for keeping such careful order on the floor on such a controversial topic.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair thanks the gentlewoman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I have the pleasure of yielding 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) who has been to Iraq several times, has wrestled with his conscience and understands the situation of jihadist terrorism worldwide.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

I deeply admire TOM LANTOS, my friend, whom I have known for so many years, and IKE SKELTON, the authors of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this is a debate about an issue we all have strong feelings about. I regret to say it's a debate that's under a closed rule that doesn't allow all aspects of this issue to come to the forefront, and I deeply regret that.

We asked for a new Secretary of Defense. We wanted Rumsfeld replaced, and he was replaced by Secretary Gates. We asked for a new general on the ground and a new strategy, and General Petraeus was chosen.

After all that he had already done, he was willing to step in. He received unanimous support in the Senate, unanimous support. He has asked one thing from us with this new strategy. He said, give me until September 15 to show what we can do with this surge.

What this resolution does is it bypasses that. It basically, in my judgment, pulls the rug out from under General Petraeus. I think we owe it to him, unless he were to come back and say, we need to change our strategy right now, but he hasn't done that.

In my 17 visits to Iraq, I have seen good months and bad months. Since December, I think it's pretty extraordinary that we have won back Anbar province, an all-Sunni province. The irony is, we had given it up, and it had become a mini Afghanistan with al Qaeda acting like the Taliban. The tribal leaders came to us and said, help us get rid of them.

If we were not there to do that, they would be stuck with an Afghanistan with a Taliban type leadership in all of the Sunni area in Anbar province. But, fortunately, we didn't pull the rug out from under them. We are there to help them.

I think there are at least two inconvenient truths that we are dealing with. One inconvenient truth is the one that Al Gore talks about, which I wish more of us paid attention to, and that's global warming. The other inconvenient truth is what the 9/11 Commission report says, we are confronting Islamist terrorists.

Islamist terrorists have made it very clear that this is ground zero. If we were to leave Iraq, Iraq, in my judgment, would be like Afghanistan, with no troops to prevent the insurgents to do just what the Taliban did. I just hope and pray that we find a way to work together, that we look at bringing the Iraq Study Group presentation before us, because we all say we can support it. Let's build on what we can agree.

I conclude by making this point. We ask the Shia, Sunnis and Kurds to work together and reach out to each other, but Democrats and Republicans are having a hard time reaching out and working together. Bring forward a bipartisan proposal and see how well it could do on the House floor.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to my good friend and distinguished colleague from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this bill to finally end this disastrous war. President Bush's war in Iraq has been the biggest foreign policy catastrophe in our Nation's history. We have been distracted from doing the job in Afghanistan, the Nation that harbored al Qaeda. Hundreds of billions of dollars have evaporated into the sands of Iraq while vital needs have gone unmet at home. Our international reputation has been battered and bruised. Our Army has been hollowed out.

The war has cut short the lives of more than 3,600 of our bravest citizens, injured tens of thousands more. Yet this President continues to insist that we remain in Iraq.

Today we must tell this President he is wrong. We must take a stand against this tragic war, begin the hard work of repairing our foreign policy. We must listen to the American people and vote to end this war.

Let us truly support our troops and vote to bring them home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to Mr. PRICE of Georgia.

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad and disappointing day for this House and for America. Once again, the majority is placing politics over national security, politics over reasoned policy, politics and partisanship over citizens and sanity.

Clearly this bill was not written in response to what our generals think, whose interim report was released just hours ago. Instead, it was written in reaction to polls and to political pressure from MoveOn.org and others. This isn't a thoughtful piece of legislation to achieve success in Iraq or success for America.

The lack of definition for a limited presence included in the bill reveals that this is just another cynical attempt by the majority to politically pander. How terribly disappointing.

In effect, this legislation is a vote of no confidence in our military commanders, and it's a shot of encouragement to al Qaeda. It's pure political opportunism, and it's devoid of military strategy.

As Members of Congress, we have a greater responsibility than just to politics. We have a responsibility to do what is in the best interest of long-term American security. We must be thoughtful. We must be deliberate in our actions.

We have a capable leader, General David Petraeus, unanimously approved by the Senate, the expert in counterinsurgency strategy. He was given by this Congress, just a few weeks ago, until September, to make positive progress in Iraq and report.

But this majority isn't interested in what our military commanders are capable of, or the situation on the ground. Their only interest is politics, in raising the white flag and in coming home without any thought or definition as to when or where they are willing to defend our security.

But because the political climate is ripe, the majority wants to undercut our troops. It's upsetting, it's sad, and it's very disconcerting that politics would trump national security.

This bill signals to our enemies that it doesn't matter what the commanders say. It says that thoughtful military strategy takes a back seat to good politics.

This isn't an exit strategy, it's a political strategy. How terribly disappointing.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this bill and to commit to positively working together on behalf of the American people and American security.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, before yielding to our last speaker, I want to express my disgust and outrage at this arrogance which we have just heard.

The previous speaker assumes that there is a monopoly of virtue and wisdom on one side. That is not the case.

We have listened to our colleagues on the other side with respect and attention, and that is exactly what we demand of every single Member on the Republican side. This was an appalling spectacle debasing what has thus far been a fine and noble debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the conscience of this House, my good friend from Georgia, Congressman JOHN LEWIS.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I am going to thank my friend, my colleague, Chairman LANTOS, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. This resolution is not a panacea. It will not get us out of Iraq tomorrow, next week or next month, but it is a step that will bring an end to this madness.

Our President, the commander in chief, told us a few days ago, that the surge is just beginning when he deployed more troops 6 months ago. He asked Members of Congress to wait. He is telling the American people to be patient.

We cannot wait. We cannot be patient. The American people want an end to this war and end it now.

How many more of our young people must die before we realize enough is enough? One more day of involvement is too many. One more death is one too many. This war is not worthy of another drop of human blood.

It is leaving a stain on the moral fabric of this Nation and destroying our credibility in the community of nations. We will never find the answer to Iraq down the barrel of a gun or in the warhead of a missile.

Vote for this resolution and bring this war to an end and bring it to an end now.

□ 1400

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield the balance of our time to the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on the bill, H.R. 2956.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, the National Counterterrorism Center recently issued a report entitled, ''Al Qaeda Better Positioned to Strike the West.'' This report concludes that al Qaeda has reorganized, regrouped, and is stronger now than it has been in years.

Yesterday, in the Armed Services Committee, we heard testimony that al Qaeda has established itself in the mountains along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and is operating with relative impunity. On Tuesday, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff says he has a gut feeling we will be attacked this summer.

For years, Democrats have been saying we need to focus our efforts on combating al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but the President took our brave soldiers and our resources to Iraq. Now it appears that the President's disastrous policy of ignoring the real threats and bogging our military down in Iraq has borne fruit. The area and the country is destabilized and more dangerous to their neighbors and to us. Thanks to the President's policy, our military is now overextended, our Nation is deep in debt, and our international reputation is stained.

This cannot be allowed to continue. We are America the beautiful. We are the greatest country on Earth. We are the beacon of light and hope. We need to withdraw from Iraq, place our soldiers in a place where they can respond to any terrorist threats, and protect our borders as we once again reclaim our moral reputation.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I claim the time that has been yielded to me, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have the greatest respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). I honor him and respect him deeply. But this legislation is deeply and fatally flawed. It will damage America and American interests for two reasons:

First, it is a purely political document, hopelessly vague and meaningless. Let me explain why. The bill turns on two key terms. One, that the United States transition to a ''limited presence'' in Iraq within the next 120 days; and, two, that the President provide a justification of ''the minimum force levels required to protect the United States' national security interests in Iraq.''

While I am pleased that the authors recognize that we are in Iraq to protect our national security interests, again, the legislation is hopelessly vague and therefore meaningless. Neither of these two key terms, ''limited presence'' and ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national security interests'' is defined. Oh, the bill has a definition section and other terms are defined, but ''limited presence'' and ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national security interests'' aren't defined.

You might ask yourself, why would the authors of the measure leave two such critically important terms undefined? Well, the answer is easy: Because this bill is not about policy; this bill is about politics.

The chairman of the Armed Services Committee knows exactly why these terms are not defined, and indeed the Democratic leadership knows why these terms are not defined. They are not defined because they need ambiguity. Indeed, ambiguity in this legislation is essential to its passage. They know that they can't agree on what the meanings of these terms are. You see, if they defined ''limited presence'' as too many troops, then their most liberal, most antiwar Members would not vote for the legislation. They couldn't. And, if they defined limited presence too low, then their Blue Dog Members would not support the bill. Again, this bill is about beating up on the President and about scaring nervous Members of Congress.

Again, let's look at the other term, ''minimum force levels required to protect U.S. national security interests.'' Why not define what that minimum is? Answer, again, if they define it too high, those who want out tonight and want our force levels at the lowest conceivable level couldn't vote for the bill. And if they define it too low, then those who recognize we face a threat from Iran and other regions' interests wouldn't vote for the bill. It is deeply flawed for those reasons.

And I would ask proponents of the bill what they would say if the President, as he could under the language of the bill, were to decide that ''limited presence'' means 154,000 troops, just 1,000 fewer than we have now? That would comply with the letter of the bill, but it wouldn't satisfy proponents of the bill.

And what if the President, as he can under the language of the bill, were to define the term ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national interests'' not as 155,000 troops as we have today, but rather at 500,000 troops?

You see, they can't agree on those terms. I wonder how many of the Members realize that the critical terms in this bill aren't defined.

The bill is also flawed for a second reason, and that is that it reneges on the essential agreement Congress struck just 2 weeks ago. It is a little bit like Lucy pulling the football out from under Linus just before he kicks it. Here, don't rely on my opinion; rely instead on today's Washington Post. You see, today's Washington Post editorial makes the case for me. The Washington Post, not exactly a conservative journal, says, ''It seems like just weeks ago, because it was, that Congress approved funding for the war in Iraq and instructed General David H. Petraeus to report back on the war's progress in September.'' Ladies and gentlemen, this isn't September.

The Post goes on to write, ''Before Congress begins ordering withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they asked for to see whether their strategy can offer some hope.'' We owe it to those generals to give them, as The Washington Post says, the months they asked for, but, instead, we have given them 27 days.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BOSWELL).

Mr. BOSWELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for this opportunity to speak. I rise in support of this legislation.

Much has been said these past years about the extent of the U.S. engagement in Iraq. The Iraqi people have made progress. Saddam is gone. They have had elections. We are told they have got over 300,000 Iraqi police and soldiers trained, equipped, and in the field. They are engaged in a civil war, and we cannot be involved in trying to referee that. As well as others in this body, I have been given assurances that they have that many troops.

I believe the war in Iraq has had a serious negative effect on the readiness of our brave men and women in uniform who are serving with honor and distinction. Their deployments and, oftentimes, redeployments without adequate time at home to rest and train is affecting our Nation's ability to meet future contingencies. As it stands today, listen up, as it stands today, we do not have, repeat, do not have a single combat-ready brigade ready to be deployed.

The United States cannot chart the destiny of the people of Iraq. The Iraqi Government must take responsibility for its own nation, and this legislation puts us on the path to see to that worthy and noble cause.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS).

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

The interim report released by the President today details exactly what I anticipated, a lack-of-progress report which demonstrates that the Iraqi Government has made the least progress on those key benchmarks that are vital to achieving stabilization.

The President at a press conference earlier today stressed the usual line of excuses that he has far too often utilized in the past, stating that we need to give General Petraeus time to show that the plus-up is effective and stress the importance of waiting until the September 15 progress report is released before drawing conclusions on the policy in Iraq. However, the President forgot to mention that General Petraeus said in an interview just last month that the chances of having a stable Iraqi Government in place by September are slim to none. Those are his words.

Frankly, our troops need our support, and that support must be their redeployment, which will end the continued bloodshed.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, my friend, my colleague, the gentlelady from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER).

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to voice my very strong support for Chairman SKELTON's legislation. It represents an unequivocal belief that the United States cannot and should not be in the business of fighting Iraq's civil war.

For over 4 years, it has been clear to me that our troops successfully and bravely accomplished the mission authorized by the President in the fall of 2002.

Today's report that our troops have done their job but the Iraqi Government has not underscores the deep problems with the Bush administration's approach. We are no longer at war with Iraq's Government; instead, our forces are caught in the middle of an escalating sectarian conflict in Iraq, with no end in sight. Yet, the President continues to blindly stay the course, with disastrous and deadly consequences.

Chairman SKELTON's bill would make significant reductions in our troop presence by April of 2008. Democrats, along with our Republican colleagues who no longer trust the President's leadership, are doing all we can to change the President's full speed ahead mismanagement of the war in Iraq and divert the policy toward returning our troops home sooner and safer.

This more responsible presence, which limits U.S. presence to fighting

terrorism and training Iraq forces, will be a first step in restoring stability in Iraq and the readiness of our military which has been badly damaged over the last 4 years.

I appreciate Chairman SKELTON's leadership on this matter, and I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense approach.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona.

And while I have the utmost respect for the chairman, I disagree with him on this resolution and I do rise to oppose the resolution today.

I guess I don't like the rhetoric of defeat. And I think that if we look at the situation in Iraq and if we look at the global war on terror, we have to ask ourselves: If we accept defeat at the hands of the terrorists, then what type message are we going to send? And I don't think that we would like that. Because if we pull out now, it is going to say that the U.S. is weak in the war on terror. It is going to say that we accept roving death squads in the streets of Baghdad, that we accept ethnic cleansing and a region engulfed in all-out chaos. That is the message we send. Just as when we were children, our actions carry a message with them.

Our soldiers deserve the confidence of their leaders, and not second-guessing by politicians that are a half world away. I think that they need to know that we are with them.

I had a message from a Marine parent. And they said, You know, we have our men out there fighting every day. They are using all the tools available to them. They are in combat. They are in patrols. They are using technology to stabilize, to train Iraqi troops. Then at night they come home, they come back to that post, that forward operating base, and they hammer out e-mails and blogs to those of us here to help combat the rhetoric coming out of Washington, DC.

General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker have a plan, the Baghdad Security Plan. We find out now much of Baghdad is more secure than it was. Most of the troops to carry out this plan just landed, just got there 2 weeks ago to start implementing the plan. I think that for us to second-guess is inappropriate. I think that it may be the fashionable thing to want to pull out.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey, a member of the Armed Services Committee, my friend and colleague, Mr. ANDREWS.

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

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

I support this legislation because it will make America safer. Our safety depends upon stability in Iraq.

Now, there are two ways to achieve stability in Iraq. The first is to prop up the present government and hope it succeeds.

□ 1415

That has failed. The best evidence of that failure is from Iraqi leaders themselves. Last weekend, a Shiite Member of Iraq's legislature said, in the absence of enough security forces, authorities should help residents arm themselves for their own protection. The Sunni president of Iraq said, people have a right to expect from the government and security agencies protection for their lives, land, honor and property, Mr. al-Hashemi said. But in the case of the inability of Iraqi security forces, the people have no choice but to take up their own defense.

This government has failed, and we are spending the precious blood of our sons and daughters to prop it up.

The second way to achieve stability in Iraq is to compel a political solution. This resolution will do that. It deserves our support.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I would start out with the title of this, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Positively Orwellian to name a resolution the Redeployment From Iraq Act. I have gone back and revisited George Orwell, and I can tell you this says, the Cut and Run From Iraq Act. And however you want to cut it, that's part of it.

Then it says, be moved in a safe and orderly manner. And I'd like to know from the other side, was the helicopter lifting people off of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, was that safe and orderly? Would that comply with your definition?

Another point, we have in this Congress constitutional responsibilities and authorities with regard to war. The first thing we can do in this Congress is declare war. The second thing we can do is to raise an army and a navy, and the third thing is to fund it, not to micromanage it. This is another piece of micromanagement. This is another piece of moving us down the path towards what history will record as a defeat on the floor of Congress, not a defeat in the field of battle.

Von Clausewitz said the object of war is to destroy the enemy's will and ability to conduct war. And we understand that if you don't have the will, it doesn't matter what your ability is. We're the only unchallenged super power in the world, and you're breaking down the will of the American people.

Sun Tzu said it more simply. ''Supreme excellence in warfare lies in destruction of your enemy's will to resist an advance of perceptible hostilities.'' And yet the American people's will has been systematically undermined by the debate here on this floor, by the debate in the national news media. And I question, in the face of the opposition that we have to our will here in this country, if we ever can manage the effort to rise up and defend freedom with this kind of support that we lack.

And then, when Mr. PRICE of Georgia lays out that the Defeatocrats in Congress are invested in defeat, the former gentleman from California rose up and squealed. And being the leading number one pork-producing district in America, I can tell you, when you throw a rock into the pigpen, the ones that squeal are the ones you hit.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to my friend, my colleague, a gentleman who is a member of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. COURTNEY from Connecticut.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, during my work period at home, my district office in Norwich was visited by a young Army enlisted man who had in one hand his orders for his fourth deployment over the last 4 years. Over the last 4 years, he did two 1-year deployments in Iraq and one 7-month deployment in Afghanistan.

In his other hand he held a bag of medication, anti-anxiety medication, including Zoloft, because of the post-traumatic stress which we got actually diagnosed from a treating psychiatrist a few days later, which confirmed that his deployments have taken him to the breaking point. That is the dirty little secret about this surge policy, which is that we've broken the ground forces of this country.

This legislation crafted by Mr. SKELTON, whose number one focus as chairman of the Armed Services Committee is always about raising and maintaining an armed force that can protect our national interest, is desperately needed, primarily for the people who have borne the disproportionate share of this war, which is the people who serve in our uniform and their families.

It is easy for us to talk about commitment in this chamber. It's time to stand up for the real people who are sacrificing for that commitment.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER).

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I understand this or any administration's defensive posture when it comes to criticism of policy. And I understand the members of his party feeling the need to defend it. This interim report, ordinarily, I would be one who would wait until September. But this interim report that shows an appalling lack of progress on the political front in Iraq leads me to this conclusion.

I was on active duty for 4 years during Vietnam, and I went down to Vietnam Wall the other night; 50-something thousand dead American names down there. We have now, 3,500-plus dead American names on the Iraq wall.

And what was true then, to me, is true now. And General Petraeus himself said it not long ago when he said, military action is necessary, but any student of history recognizes that no military solution to a problem like

Iraq is there. Military action may be necessary, but it is not sufficient. There needs to be a political aspect.

The political aspect, as reported in this interim report, shows this: Of the 275 members of the Iraqi parliament, over one-third are presently boycotting meetings. Over one-third of the ministers are boycotting the meetings. Two years after the Iraqi elections, the government there is dysfunctional.

Now just listen to General Petraeus's words. We have to have a political aspect. And this present strategy, whether the surge works or not, is beside the point. These people are unwilling or unable to come together, after 2 years of a government, to work together to build any kind of civil society that we can support.

I think that it is now time, with this interim report and the lack of political progress there, to send a message. Nobody's talking about precipitous withdrawal. What we are talking about is this Congress engaging with this administration to support the troops and help them from this morass.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inquire as to the time remaining on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROSS). The gentleman from Arizona has 21 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Missouri has 73 minutes remaining.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California, the former attorney general of California, Mr. LUNGREN.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, since I consider the gentleman from Missouri such a stalwart Member of this House, and a friend, I rise not in anger but in sorrow as I oppose his amendment. I have profound disagreements with the specifics of this particular bill.

I came to Congress, returned to Congress after 9/11 precisely because of 9/11, because I thought we needed, as a country, to respond to the threat of Islamofascism in an effective way and that we needed to recognize that our war against Islamofascism was a multifronted war. And one of the fronts of that war is Iraq. You can argue whether it's the number one front or not, but it is important. And I think everyone would agree. And what we do there is important. And how we act there is important. And when we withdraw, even though we call it a redeployment, that is important. It is a message that goes beyond Iraq. It goes to all of those who would do us ill in this world.

And I can't understand, when we had General Petraeus look us in the eye just a couple of weeks ago and say to Members, I believe in my mission; I've told my men and my women that I believe in the mission; and if I didn't believe in it, I would tell you immediately because I'm not going to sacrifice men and women in vain. And he said, give me the time to do it. And we said, yes, sir, you have the time. And now we say, when he's over there with his men and women, we're not going to give you the time. We're going to second guess.

I don't understand how you prosecute a war. One Member got up and said, let's end this war by passing this resolution. You end a war usually in America by winning, by defeating the enemy.

We have this bill up now. We're going to have a bill up in another couple of weeks that's going to tell us we have to change the habeas corpus issue, we have to grant habeas corpus to unlawful enemy combatants, for the first time in the history of our Nation, putting us at a position that we never would have had in World War II. It would have crippled us during World War II.

And then we're going to hear, close down Guantanamo. Let's look at this bill as just a piece of the approach that the other side is taking.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS).

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. The responsible redeployment of our troops is a brave step toward a new direction for the war in Iraq. It will remove our troops from the most dangerous kill zones in Iraq and refocus our efforts toward defeating terrorism across the globe.

The decision to redeploy is one that I have not come to lightly. This bill gives the President the power to maintain a military presence in the region while, at the same time, imposing the accountability the American people demand that we enforce.

Four years into a difficult and prolonged engagement, I had hoped we would have seen better proposals for progress in quelling the violence. Throughout the course of our debate, whether on the air waves, Internet or in the halls of Congress, we've heard much of the supposed failures of our military goals. We hear often of continued strife and instability in the nation we sought to set free; of an Iraqi economy crippled by the trials of war; of parliamentary disputes, civil unrest and sectarian violence; and of a peace we all believe in that has yet to take place in Iraq.

But these stories, however true, are only a portion of our efforts. They are the darkest side of our endeavors meant to do good and sinfully omit the triumphs and victories of our sons and daughters who've done a great service.

For all that remains undone, our troops have accomplished a great deal. We brought free and open elections to a nation once shackled by a tyrannical regime. Iraq has experienced freedoms unimagined before, and Saddam Hussein was put to death for his crimes.

It is in this vein that we must continue our presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, the greater Middle East and around the world, for it is essential to our security.

As we prepare to redeploy our troops from Iraq, we must commit as well to remain ever vigilant in the face of terrorism. Whether they are threats to America and her allies, whether radicalism threatens the foundations of the natural freedoms we've sought so hard to prove, we must prepare ourselves to face those threats and bring their agents either to justice or a swift demise.

We must continue our hunt for Osama Bin Laden and the instruments of al Qaeda. While I am behind the efforts to redeploy, our military must be equipped and prepared to protect American civilians, property and interests at home and abroad.

As I prepared my case today on the merits of redeployment, I was reminded of a speech delivered by Congressman Abraham Lincoln on January 12, 1848, that railed against President James K. Polk of Tennessee for bringing our country to war with Mexico. Lincoln believed that Polk had stretched the facts to fit the case for war, just as many have expressed their belief here that our President stretched the truth about WMDs to make his case for war.

President Polk's war with Mexico yielded the borders that stand today. Our nations endured the battle of Vera Cruz, the battle of Mexico City, but the results of the Mexican-American war remain, and our two countries live as partners in peace. The results of the war yielded positive results. History has favorably judged James K. Polk, just as history will judge this President.

So as the President considers signing the order to redeploy, I hope he will. I implore him to consider the advice of Mr. Lincoln.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I thank him for his outstanding leadership on this floor and within the Republican Study Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to come to the floor today and debate this resolution with my fellow members of the Republican Study Committee. But if press reports are to be believed, I am disturbed by the reason that we are here, and that is, is this a poll driven resolution?

We all know that our Democratic colleagues now have one of the lowest congressional approval ratings in almost 50 years. We know they don't want to spend time on this floor debating how little has been achieved in their tenure, and perhaps they want to spend even less time talking about what they have achieved; the single largest tax increase in American history, a secret earmarking plan gone awry, and a spendorama, spending millions and millions on peanut storage, NASA and dairy products, put into a

bill to support our troops in harm's way.

□ 1430

Putting polls aside, why are we here? Make no mistake about it. What we are debating today is whether or not to declare defeat in Iraq, the battlefront in our war against radical Islam.

Everyone knows that fighting this battle in Iraq is costly, but losing this battle in Iraq is even costlier.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes life presents us with lousy options, but that is a reality with which we must deal. Iraq must be seen in the larger context of our war with radical Islam. The battle lines are drawn; and whether or not we like it, they are drawn in Iraq.

Don't take my word for it. Take the word of Osama bin Laden: ''The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad. Success in Baghdad will be success for the United States. Failure in Iraq is the failure of the United States. Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all of their wars.'' And we have to soberly reflect upon the enemy that we are facing. Listen to the number two in al Qaeda, al Zawahiri: ''Al Qaeda has the right to kill 4 million Americans, 2 million of them children.''

Mr. Speaker, two of those children are my children. And I take this very, very seriously.

Al Qaeda has further vowed to expel the Americans from Iraq. They have vowed that they will ''launch a jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.''

Again, this is the enemy we face and we face him foremost in Iraq. If we leave Iraq before subduing him, he will follow us here to our shores. And make no mistake about it. The consequences are immense. Read the National Intelligence Estimate. Read the report of the Iraq Study Group. Precipitous withdrawal declaring defeat will not end this war. Instead, it will make it worse. It will send it to neighboring countries. It may lead to genocide.

Now, I have listened to the debate of my colleagues carefully. Some still complain about the decision to go in. It's a moot point. Many want to complain about mistakes or incompetence of 3 years, 2 years, or perhaps 1 year ago that may or may not be accurate. Today they are irrelevant.

The question is what do we do now? We have a new commander. We have a new strategy. We have a report due in September. We have signs of hope. Let's give it a chance. There is too much at stake to declare defeat today.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland, my friend (Mr. GILCHREST).

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding.

The question before us today is if failure in Iraq is not an option and staying the course is not working, what are our options? It is vital that we focus our attention this morning and this afternoon on that question, then formulate an integrated set of proposals that include the basic premise that a stable Iraq and a stable Middle East is in the vital interest of the United States and the international community, also taking into consideration here the military's assertion, through General Petraeus, that the war cannot be won with a military alone. An integrated set of proposals for an overall strategy then must include, which is in this bill before us today, diplomatic efforts, political efforts, economic efforts, social, humanitarian, cultural, and a military component. We must also garner the constructive engagement of all of Iraq's neighbors.

When Nixon went to China, the domino theory of Vietnam became irrelevant. When Nixon went to China, there was a Sino-Soviet split that advantaged the United States. If we go to Iran, al Qaeda in Iraq will be irrelevant. If we go to Iran, the idea of a spread of terrorism, of those problems in the Middle East will be eliminated.

The idea that this piece of legislation moves forward in the next step of the Iraq Study Group is, in my judgment, on the right mark. It is profound. And I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding and for bringing this legislation to the floor.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona for yielding, and I want to thank the gentleman from Missouri for being an honorable gentleman during this tough time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start with a couple of warnings. First, I would suggest anyone on the Republican side shaking hands with the majority might want to be careful because they have been licking their fingers and sticking them into the political wind.

Second, government opinion by polls may lead to short-term success at the ballot box, but in this case it could lead to a catastrophe on a global scale.

We in this House best serve the United States, Iraq, and the world community if we establish conditions in Iraq that allow for a somewhat orderly transition to autonomy for Iraqis. A quick withdrawal from Iraq would set off a fuse that would eventually blow up not only Iraq but quite possibly surrounding countries as well.

Iraq foreign minister on Monday warned against a quick withdrawal by the United States, saying, ''The dangers could be a civil war dividing the country, regional wars, and the collapse of the state.''

Today when we talk about the Holocaust or when we talk about Rwanda or when we talk about the Sudan, we ask how could good people stand by and let this happen. It is an important lesson to remember as we pull out our voting cards today. Remember, we are trying to help. If we pull out of Iraq, we guarantee that the Tigris and the Euphrates will run red with the blood of innocents. We guarantee a safe haven for the training camps of al Qaeda. We guarantee more free rein for the death squads of Moqtada al Sadr. We guarantee a civil war between Shiites and Sunnis. We guarantee even more or worse instability in the region, perhaps for decades.

No matter how we vote today, we are not going to stop the war. We may stop fighting, but we are not going to stop the war. As Indonesian jihadist leader Abu Bakar Bashir said, ''All Muslims should fight to create an Islamic state. There are only two options for Muslims, to win or to die.''

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my colleague and friend, the gentlewoman from California, member of the Armed Services Committee (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ).

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

I rise today as a cosponsor of H.R. 2956, and although I support this resolution, I must express my sadness that it has come to this point.

This President was wrong when he claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. He has had over 4 years. He has asked for more time, for more troops, for more surges. And regardless of what our military experts and our troops on the ground say, this President continues to claim that we are winning the war in Iraq.

Mr. President, what reports are you reading? Whom are you listening to? Certainly not the reports that I have read or the military officials I have spoken to, who tell a very different story about what is happening in Iraq. To me it is with sadness that this Congress has to tell you that your war in Iraq is a failure and that we will not let you leave our brave men and women over there when you have no plan to allow them to succeed. We will not let them be targets any longer.

History will show, Mr. President, that your war was a failure. But today the Congress stood up to you and said enough is enough.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague and friend from the leadership, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON).

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. SKELTON for yielding me this time.

They buried Andre Craig, 24 years old, last week. He died in the service of his country. His family held a press conference prior to that and said, he was exhausted.

Mr. SKELTON has put forward a piece of legislation, not a resolution, a bill that address the men and women in the armed services, that addresses the problems that they face on a daily basis in Iraq.

There is a difficult choice today to be made. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are honorable people. They understand as well exactly what it is

like to go to a funeral service, to look into the eyes of these families, many who have been deployed three and four times, who are stretched to the maximum. You know what they are experiencing. It is hard to reconcile, because we know you are honorable people, the indifference that seems to lie in the choice between the blind loyalty to the worst foreign policy endeavor in the history of the country and the men and women who are there paying for it every single day. You are right, emotions run deep.

How many more of these services will it take for us to face the truth and the facts? People have come to this floor and said, well, you know that the President is going to veto this. One thing we know for sure is where the President stands and what he has said he will do and how this will be passed on to another administration. But the thing here is what we will do, what you will do.

Find your voice. Speak on behalf of the troops. Follow IKE SKELTON.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague, a member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES).

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. I thank the chairman for this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2956.

For more than 4 years, our men and women in uniform have faithfully, skillfully served in Iraq. This legislation makes clear that the Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future.

Mr. Speaker, when Marine General ''Jack'' Sheehan, a former top NATO commander, declined to serve the White House as war czar for Afghanistan and Iraq, he stated his reasons for not accepting this position: ''The very fundamental issue is they don't know where the hell they're going.'' That is what Marine Corps GEN Jack Sheehan said. General Sheehan's statement is why the Congress and the administration need to work together to develop an end point to the war strategy in Iraq. It is time for Congress to meet its constitutional responsibility by defining what victory in Iraq will look like.

Stay the course is not the answer. As Colin Powell said last week, ''We have to face the reality of the situation that is on the ground and not what we would want it to be. It is not a civil war that can be put down or solved by the Armed Forces of the United States.'' Colin Powell, I quoted him. That is his statement.

We are now in the 5th year in Iraq, and 3,611 Americans have died in the war. Mr. Speaker, to this date I have sent over 6,400 letters to the families and extended families of our men and women in the military who have lost their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq, and every time I sign a letter, my heart aches.

Chairman SKELTON's plan provides a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance the diplomatic, political, and economic components of United States national security interests in Iraq. It has taken this country in a direction that it needs to consider.

Mr. Speaker, I close by reminding this Congress what Rudyard Kipling said in his writings known as ''Epitaphs of War,'' and we need to all be responsible for this, and this is my quote from him: ''If any question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied.''

□ 1445

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Member of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. GRESHAM BARRETT.

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I hope the chairman of the Armed Services Committee knows how much I respect him and truly love this man.

Mr. Speaker, I know of no other place than Washington, DC, where it's okay to look a man in the face, tell him we're going to give him the time, the resources and everything he needs to accomplish a mission, and then halfway through the process, say, oops, I'm sorry, time's up. We made a mistake. Mission over.

No one person I know or have known executing this war on radical Islam has more credibility than David Petraeus, a gentleman who was confirmed unanimously in the United States Senate, but instead of giving GEN David Petraeus, a man whose boots are on the ground, a fair opportunity and allowing him the time he needs to better implement the plan and report back, we once again see legislators trying to micromanage this war. The problem is, we've turned this into a political war, a war where politicians are pulling the strings, not the man we said could do it.

If anyone can pull this off, David Petraeus can. If any armed services in the world can be successful, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces can. But let them accomplish the mission. Let them continue to win. Let them bring us victory.

In recent weeks, we've witnessed in Great Britain how real the threat remains. Whether we're talking about Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the enemy is there, the enemy is real; and to ignore the threat that they pose to this Nation is unconscionable.

We owe it to our troops on the ground, to those who have served, to those who have died, and the American people to allow the plan General Petraeus developed to take effect.

Mr. Speaker, the stakes are too high. Keep this country safe. Keep this country strong. Do the courageous thing. Vote against this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 1 minute to the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the Armed Services Committee, Mrs. DAVIS of California.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2956.

I just returned from Iraq. The trip was only a snapshot of what was happening on the ground, but I heard two messages: One, we need more time to train Iraqi troops and leadership; but two, progress is not evident. We are taking two steps back for every step forward. Our men and women are serving heroically, but it is clear our progress is limited, at best. So where do we go from here?

Mr. Speaker, we need a plan that moves beyond the surge to a time frame that says we will continue to support Iraqis in a limited capacity but that we will redeploy the bulk of our forces within a prescribed period of time.

We are all concerned about the impact our redeployment could have on our adversaries, and the region as a whole. However, the reality on the ground is that, whether it's in 6 months or 2 years, the size of our current force cannot be sustained. The true focus must be on how we disengage, how we and our allies work together to support our aims for a free and open society in Iraq.

Our choices are bad, awful and worse. But this legislation, I believe, will move us a step closer to a day when Iraq's leaders and politicians can take back control of their country and our men and women can return home to their families and a grateful Nation.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I am very pleased to yield 5½ minutes to the distinguished Republican whip, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and for the effort he and others are making on the floor here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to this editorial today from the Washington Post which says, ''It seems like just weeks ago''—because it was that—''that Congress approved funding for the war in Iraq and instructed General David Petraeus to report back on the war's progress in September. Before Congress begins ordering withdrawals, they should at least give those generals the months they asked for to see whether their strategy can offer some help.'' Mr. Speaker, I think that, in a nutshell, sums up what we ought to be talking about today instead of what we are talking about today.

I've heard this resolution referred to as a ''new way forward,'' but it doesn't provide a new way forward. It, frankly, serves no purpose in meeting the challenge that we face today with our totalitarian enemies.

I'm told that, yesterday, in the House Appropriations Committee, 45 minutes was spent debating whether cats should be declawed before they were allowed into public housing; 45 minutes to decide whether cats should be declawed in public housing, and by the way, that committee decided they should, and no minutes spent to talk

about this bill. No hearing on an April 1 deadline. No outside testimony on a bill that was quickly put together to serve a purpose of, I believe, changing the subject of the failure of this Congress to get its other work done back to a subject that is obviously creating stress in America today, and that is, what do we do about the totalitarian enemies we face and their lack of appreciation for innocent human life?

Commanders in the field say that a responsible deployment from Iraq would take at least a year. Maybe that's why we didn't have a hearing on how long it would take to responsibly and safely leave Iraq. There was no testimony from the military about an April 1 deadline. In fact, I can't even find any evidence of any consultation with the military about an April 1 deadline.

And what does ''limited presence'' on page three of this, what does that mean? What does ''limited presence'' mean? I suppose it means whatever it needs to mean when you go home and explain why you voted for the bill, because it doesn't mean anything. Limited presence means nothing, and it's a key criteria of this approach.

The same people who say we went into Iraq without a well thought-out plan now want to leave without a plan at all. And that's what is wrong with what we're talking about today.

Let's go back to page three of the bill itself. The President is supposed to report back in January things like the projected number of armed forces necessary to carry out the missions. The projected annual cost of the missions. The projected duration of the missions, I guess to suggest that there really aren't going to be missions if you leave April 1 if you've been on the other side of this issue up to now, if a few weeks ago you were for giving the generals in the field up until September, and now you're for deciding what we're going to be doing in April without knowing what that September situation is about.

And it goes on, on page 3, to talk about whether it's necessary, I guess defining the missions, whether it's necessary to have Armed Forces to carry out the following missions; protecting United States diplomatic facilities and United States citizens, including members of the Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions. You can pretty much make this, I guess, whatever you want it to. Serving in rolls consistent with customary diplomatic positions. Engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations.

Now, we're going to decide, apparently the President should decide in January whether that continues to be an important thing, or whether training and equipping members of the Iraqi Armed Forces continues to be an important thing.

Where was the effort made to determine the impact on al Qaeda worldwide, or to determine the impact on Hezbollah or other agents of terror and how that would affect our security in the United States if we precipitously leave one more time, if we precipitously leave without a plan?

Only a few weeks ago, again, as others have verified all over the country in editorials today, I and others stood on this floor and said, our troops deserve a funding bill without strings and without congressional pork. Today, I'm here to say that they deserve a chance to carry out their mission without looking over their shoulder all the time to see what the Congress of the United States is about to do next.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from Texas, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to Mr. SKELTON, the outstanding Congressman from Missouri.

I rise to support H.R. 2956. If we could stop this war today, it would please my constituents. And if we could do it without more violence, I would be picketing to do it.

All of us know, that have any common sense, that we cannot bring the troops home today, but we can develop a good strategy to make sure that they get the message in Iraq that we are coming home. We still have 150,336 troops over there. Are we going to stay until they all get killed?

We talk about how many have lost lives. I was a nurse in the Veterans' Administration for 15 years, and I saw the damaged lives of these veterans coming home from war. What are we doing for ourselves and the future? This is not a partisan issue, this is an issue that saves America.

Mr. Speaker, the most recent report from the Department of Defense, states there are 150,336 brave American troops in the middle of a violent civil war in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the President has repeatedly made it clear that nothing will discourage him from pursuing a war that has no end in sight.

Congress cannot and should not keep waiting for the President to change course.

We must change the course ourselves, 2008 must be a year of transition in Iraq. Iraq has to grow out of the shadow of the United States.

Iraq needs to take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from its own mistakes, and find its own solutions to its own problems.

Recently, the Iraq Study Group suggested that the time has since passed when one country alone could work alongside the Iraqi leadership to steer Iraq's future.

Rather, as the report says, "the United States should immediately launch a New Diplomatic Offensive to build an international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region."

This recommendation is perhaps the last-best hope for war weary Iraqis and Americans alike.

Mr. Speaker, our brave men and women are serving with great honor in Iraq. Their service has paved the way for a democratic society.

It is time for the Iraqi government to stand up, so our troops can begin to stand-down.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 2 minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN).

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, two separate headlines on the front page of today's Washington Post tell the sad story of two of the Bush Administration's biggest national security failures. First, its disastrous Iraq policy, and second, its failure to complete the mission against al Qaeda and the Taliban along the Afghan/Pakistan border.

One headline reads, ''CIA Said Instability Appeared Irreversible.'' The article describes how, on the same day last November, the Baker-Hamilton commission received two starkly different portrayals of what was happening in Iraq. One came from President Bush, who portrayed a rosy picture, and the other came from the man who President Bush put in charge of the CIA, General Hayden, who was responsible for providing a clear-eyed analysis based on cold facts. And what he reportedly told the commission was, and I quote, ''Instability of the Iraqi Government was irreversible.'' Irreversible, he said.

These starkly different portrayals of the situation go to the core of our problems in Iraq because the President has been in a state of denial. Happy talk is no substitute for a reality-based policy. And indeed, the President's decisions based on wishful thinking have led to decisions that have weakened our national security.

Yesterday, the U.S. intelligence experts confirmed the gloomy assessment that General Hayden made last November, and today's report to Congress confirms that the Iraqi Government has failed to make sufficient progress in key areas of national reconciliation.

The other headline on the front page of the paper today on Washington Post reads, ''U.S. warns of stronger al Qaeda and describes al Qaeda's growing presence and strength along the Afghan/Pakistan border and reveals the consequences of our failure to complete the job against al Qaeda in that area.''

Mr. Speaker, we must insist that the Iraqis assume greater responsibility for their own future, and we redouble our efforts against those who did attack us on September 11, 2001. That's what this bill is about.

It's time to change direction. I urge my colleagues to adopt this bill.

Mr. SHADEGG. I note the gentleman cited the Washington Post. I wonder if he has read the editorial today which says that we should be giving our troops at least until September.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Arizona has 5½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SHADEGG. I thank the Speaker.

I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to a distinguished member of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

□ 1500

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take my 2 minutes to apologize to a few families from my district for having to listen, once again, to the Democratic leadership bringing forward a cut-and-run policy when these families have given their loved ones in this sacrifice.

I apologize to the Johnson family of Armuchee, Georgia, who sacrificed their son, Justin. I apologize to the Saylor family from Bremen, Georgia, who gave up their son, Paul. I apologize to the Clayton family of Marietta, who misses dearly their son, Captain Hayes Clayton. To Carey and Sally Brown, of Atlanta, I apologize to you for the loss of your son, Tyler. From my wife's hometown of Newnan, Georgia, I express my regret to Robert Stokely for the death of his son, Mike. Finally, I apologize to the widow of Jack Hensley from Marietta, a beheaded contract worker.

Mr. Speaker, what an appalling thing to do to these families, whose sons gave the last full measure of devotion defending liberty and fighting the terrorist Islamic extremists, to pull the rug out from under them and say: We are not going to give victory a chance. We are not even willing to wait until September. I think that it is appalling. I am ashamed of the Democratic leadership. I apologize to these families from my district who have given so much.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to others in the second person.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), a friend and colleague.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank Chairman SKELTON for yielding, but also for his commitment to our Armed Forces, as the daughter, Mr. SKELTON, of a 25-year Army veteran who loves you dearly and thanks you for supporting our troops.

As a cofounder of the Out of Iraq Caucus, I rise in support of this bill. The President has dug us deep into a hole in Iraq. By setting a clear timeline for the redeployment of United States troops, we are standing with the American people to stop the digging. If we are to climb out of this deep hole, we are going to have to make sure that when our troops come home that they all come home. That means no permanent bases. It means ending our blind commitment to arming and training Iraqi security forces. It also means that come September, we must use the power of our purse, and we must begin to fully fund the safe redeployment of our young men and women and our contractors out of Iraq.

The civil war in Iraq is raging within the very security forces we are arming and training. Our weapons and expertise are being used for sectarian violence and for killing Americans and Iraqi civilians. This policy only further endangers our troops and fuels a civil war.

We must end the Bush administration's failed policy in Iraq. It has failed. We must reconsider this blind commitment to arming and training Iraqi security forces.

Let us support our troops, and I mean support our troops in a real way, by bringing them home. This is the will of the American people. That is the goal of the Out of Iraq Caucus. That is in the national security interests of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman, once again, for his leadership and for yielding.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time it is my privilege to yield the balance of our time to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), a member of the Republican Study Committee and the ranking member on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I thank my colleague from Arizona for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the debate today, I end up having a lot of more questions than I have answers. I have a question as to whether my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that the threat from radical jihadism is real or not. Have they read the latest Zawahiri statement, ''Advice of One Concerned,'' where he goes on to say in the statement, a global system, whose center and heart is the United States and the European Union? As for the rest of the states of the world, they are the outlying states.

It goes on to say, the strategy of al Qaeda, the only way to confront them, the core states, according to al Qaeda's theory, is by taking the war from the outlying states to the central states, in which case the damage and consequences of this damage will all take place in the central states.

Have they not read the other documents that come from al Qaeda that talk about what their strategy is? Their number one goal and objective is to defeat the United States and the coalition in Iraq, then to move out into the region and destabilize the other countries in the region, eliminate the State of Israel, establish the caliphate, Southern Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East, stretch down into Asia and then establish Sharia law.

Do my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that radical Islam is a threat to the security of the United States and our allies, or not? If they don't, perhaps pulling out of Iraq is a good strategy. If they do believe that radical jihadism is a threat to the United States, if they do believe that looking at the reports in London, in Europe that radical jihadists actually have attacked in those places and that they may be attacking in the United States or planning to attack in the United States, the question becomes, if you are not willing to fight the threat of radical jihadism in Iraq, where will you engage radical jihadism, in other parts of the Middle East? Should we deploy our troops to other parts of the Middle East? Maybe we should just write off the Middle East and deploy into Northern Africa or into Western Europe, or maybe what we should do is bring them all home and redeploy them here in the United States, because they will follow us home.

So the question is, if you do believe it is a threat, where and when will you confront the threat that we face? Others have pointed it out. I have taken a look and read this resolution. I encourage all of the American people to read this bill. What does it say? Very, very little. It says that we will commence reductions of our troops. Commence reductions.

Exactly how many do you want to commence reducing? 100? 5,000? 50,000? Then by April 1 there will be a plan for a limited presence. What is ''limited presence''? There are some that would say that the number of troops we have today is a limited presence, because they may not be enough to get the job done. But the bill doesn't define where we go. This is no plan.

If this is the way forward, we are in big, big trouble, because it doesn't recognize the threat and it doesn't have a plan as to how we are going to move forward.

But there are other things that this Congress should be debating. As our minority whip said, we debated for 45 minutes as to whether cats should be declawed before moving into public housing.

The previous question that was defeated earlier today would have enabled us to deal with a real issue, and that is the modernization of FISA, our ability to listen to radical jihadists in other parts of the world as they are communicating their plans and intentions. Today, there is a massive loophole in FISA for radical jihadists who are outside of the United States to communicate, and our intelligence community is prohibited from listening to them. We provide them the full protection of American law, even though they are not United States citizens, even though they are outside of the United States, and even though they are radical jihadists. Let us fix this problem, and let's make sure that we fix it before we go home in August. We should have done it today.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my dear friend and colleague from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman Ike Skelton for getting us to this point today, 1,581 days, 53 months, over 4 years since this President led this Nation to war in Iraq; 3,600 American soldiers killed, 27,000 American soldiers seriously injured, 60,000 to 100,000 Iraqis killed; $10 billion per month, $500 billion American dollars spent on this war.

A civil war is raging in Iraq; there is no credible government in Iraq; Iraq is

totally destabilized and Iraq refugees are flooding into neighboring countries; there is no coalition of the willing supporting the U.S. in this war; and we are well on our way to destabilizing the entire Middle East.

President Bush and the chief architect of this war, Vice President DICK CHENEY, are in denial about the disastrous mess they have created. Some of us have known for quite some time this war must end. BARBARA LEE, LYNN WOOLSEY and I and several other Members of Congress created the Out of Iraq Caucus over 2 years ago. We organized this caucus, but we were dismissed as bleeding heart liberals.

It has taken too long to get to this point we are at today. This bill will at least demand a strategy to get us out of Iraq and a deadline will be set. This has been a long time in coming.

However, Mr. Speaker, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. President Bush will apply all kinds of pressure, threaten, mislead, spend us blind and continue to pursue this immoral war, unless we decide that we are not going to fund this war anymore.

In the words of the people on the street who are organized against this war, Mr. President, not another nickel, not another dime, not another soldier, not this time.

Vote for this bill. It is a good start. And remember, in the final analysis, we have got to defund this war.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) controls 40 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK).

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2956. The battle in Iraq has left many of us frustrated, and rightly so. Progress is not as fast as most of us would like it to be.

Some in this House believe that we have lost the war and should withdraw immediately. Okay, so what happens then? We leave, then what? Does al Qaeda leave us alone? Can we disband the Department of Homeland Security? Can we announce that the threat from radical jihadism has ended?

These are the questions that aren't being discussed. Why? Because the answers are difficult. We need a long-term strategy that goes against the political pandering that is preventing us from achieving long-term national security.

As cochair of the House Antiterrorism Caucus, I have heard warnings that a withdrawal will only embolden al Qaeda and other radical Islamic jihad groups. They will carry out more suicide bombing attacks, behead more innocent Iraqi people, intimidate and suppress and ultimately recruit peace-loving Muslims around the world to their cause. And what happens to those Muslims who resist the radical jihadists? They will be killed.

This is not just my view. This is what the Islamists have been saying, and, more importantly, doing for the past few years. Muslims in the Middle East do not have freedom of religion and expression, as we do here. And while it is convenient to blame America for the problems in the Muslim world, we are afraid to place the blame on those who have caused those problems.

I believe passage of this bill will be a huge mistake in our long-term national strategy and security interests, and it must be defeated.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague from Ohio (Mr. WILSON).

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides a plan for responsible redeployment of our troops. This is the time to set a new course. Setting a date certainly gives the Iraqis the incentive to actually work to meet some benchmarks.

Our military men and women are among our most precious resources. They are performing admirably with courage in a situation that they never should have been asked to be in in the first place. They are doing their job. Now we must do ours. We must bring them home.

On a recent trip to Walter Reed to visit a seriously wounded marine from my district in Pomeroy, Ohio, I saw again the damage this war has done. Not just to this young man, but to his family also. They have all put their jobs and their lives on hold to care for him.

His courage and conviction are not in question. That marine would go back to Iraq tomorrow if we asked him to. We must not ask. How much more blood should be shed? How many more families must we shatter? Enough is enough.

□ 1515

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield at this time 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON). The distinguished gentleman has been the chairman in the past of the Terrorism Subcommittee and is an expert on special operations.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise with great respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the author of this bill, but with strong opposition to H.R. 2956.

Mr. Speaker, the short title of this bill is the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.'' But, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not responsible. It is irresponsible. This bill is an irresponsible political act that will put our troops in danger and will result in catastrophic consequences for the United States, for the Iraqi people, for Israel, for the greater Middle Eastern region, and for the rest of the world.

As The Washington Post said in this morning's paper, this bill is being considered today for ''reasons having more to do with American politics than with Iraqi reality.''

We must oppose this bill for numerous reasons, but let me mention just three. First, this bill fails to highlight the consequences of reducing our force levels too early. Such consequences would have a devastating effect on Iraq, would embolden al Qaeda in Iran, and would have severe security impacts on Israel and throughout the Middle East.

Al Qaeda and its proxies are engaged in a jihad against the United States and against the West. Al Qaeda's second in command, al Zawahiri, reaffirmed in a July 4 speech an al Qaeda plan to use Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia for jihadi planning and training against us.

Second, instead of putting forward legislation that offers an alternative to the plan being implemented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, this political ploy calls for a vague ''troop reduction'' to be a ''limited presence'' in a ''safe and orderly manner'' within 120 days; but it fails to define any of these terms.

Specifically, this bill does not define what ''limited presence'' means. Does it mean 50,000 troops or 100,000 troops or 137,000 troops? What is a limited presence? No one knows. This is not a serious bill; it is a political bill.

Third, the bill requires the President to address whether it is necessary for our Armed Forces to carry out missions such as, listen to this, protecting diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens, whether it is necessary to carry out acts like acting to disrupt or eliminate al Qaeda, or if it is necessary to carry out acts including training and equipping members of Iraqi security forces. Let me ask my friends on the other side of the aisle, for goodness sake, what else would we do there?

It is illogical to ask whether these missions are necessary and only proves once again that this bill is a political tool and not an alternative plan.

There are also two other points that my colleagues should consider. First, the situation in Iraq is not conducive to a force reduction. As an example of why this is true, the British have indicated their intent to draw down and have pulled back to the Basra airport. And as a result, Basra is now in the center of a power struggle between Shiite elements and tribal leaders over control of oil and political power. Local governance control has fractured along militia lines because of a British redeployment like the ones we are talking about in this bill.

Second, we need to remind ourselves of what happened in Beirut and Afghanistan when forces precipitously withdrew there. In October 1983, our Marine barracks in Beirut was bombed by Hezbollah with support from Iran. We withdrew our Marines in February 1984, and by that April, the remainder of the peacekeeping force had followed. That civil war continued until 1990 and Hezbollah emerged as a much stronger force, which to this day threatens the West. We should ask ourselves: Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of Hezbollah and the influence of Tehran

had we not had a precipitous withdrawal like the one provided for in this bill?

Second, in the 1980s, the Afghan resistance built momentum by recruiting Muslim fighters to wage jihad against the Soviets. The Soviet withdrawal of 1989 was followed by a civil war and the collapse of the government. The Taliban rose in 1993 and gained control of Afghanistan.

In 1996, bin-Laden moved to Afghanistan where he forged an alliance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. What followed were al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center, Khobar Towers, the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the USS *Cole*, and then September 11th. My colleagues, ask yourself this: ''Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of al-Qaeda by responding to these threats?''

I want to urge my colleagues to keep in mind that the world is watching how the United States handles this tough challenge in Iraq. If we concede defeat and retreat, we will send a strong message of weakness and inability to remain committed to our allies and to our enemies.

Tom Friedman noted in the New York Times this week that our withdrawal will mean ''more ethnic, religious and tribal killings across Iraq,'' adding, ''it will be one of the most morally ugly scenes you can imagine, no less than Darfur.'' The Post today also stated that a withdrawal will result in a ''full-blown civil war, conflicts spreading beyond Iraq's borders, or genocide.'' Picture the Iraqis who have helped us, picture them watch as we prepare to leave and picture them clinging to our vehicles in fear of their very lives as we start down the road from Baghdad.

I believe this reckless abandonment of the mission in Iraq would send a clear message to the Iraqi people, our allies, and potential partners around the world that Americans are weak and cannot be trusted. In this world of transnational terrorism and proliferation we can not afford to stand alone.

It is critical that we give General Petraeus the months we gave him to implement his strategy, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this dangerous bill. In this case national security should trump national politics.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds all Members to direct their remarks to the Chair, and not to others in the second person.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to an energetic new Member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE).

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

On January 10, President Bush announced an increase of more than 20,000 troops in Iraq. Six months later, it is clear that the President's surge strategy has yielded no positive results, and Iraq continues to remain a battleground for sectarian violence and a hotbed for terrorist activity.

But in spite of the realities on the ground, the President seems intent on further digging in his heels on a failed policy that has placed targets on the backs of our troops as they attempt to referee a civil war. In the 6 months that I have served in Congress, the 17th Congressional District of Illinois has mourned the lives of six brave soldiers. In the absence of any visible progress, we can no longer stand by as more of our troops come home in body bags.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush started this war without a plan to win the peace. For the sake of our troops, our national security and our credibility around the world, this Congress must do what this President refuses to do in order to return stability to Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY).

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, as I read this resolution, I can't help but think ''there they go again.''

With approval ratings of Congress near record lows, the majority leadership searches the polls for any issue they can use to political advantage. Unfortunately, their attempt to improve their standing comes at the expense of troops on the ground and our country's security.

Of course the American people are concerned about the course of events in Iraq. Of course they mourn each loss. Of course they want our troops to come home as soon as possible. Of course they do, because we all do.

But responsible leadership does not permit pandering to polls and understandable emotions without facing up to the real consequences of the vote. And by the way, putting the word ''responsible'' in the title of a bill does not make it so. It is an understandable, though I believe misguided, position to require an immediate withdrawal of forces from Iraq. This resolution, though, is an attempt to play politics with the issue and avoid responsibility for the consequences that come from its aftermath.

Requiring withdrawal on a congressionally mandated timetable abandons those who have worked with us, invites chaos and more death in Iraq and increases the risk to our security here at home. No one should be able to stick his or her head in the sand and ignore those consequences.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that what goes on in this Chamber with resolutions like this is encouraging to our adversaries and makes the job of our troops on the ground even harder than it needs to be. How can it possibly be responsible to declare failure when all of our troops have only been in Iraq for just about exactly 1 month today. This struggle and the broader war against radical Islamist terrorists will require the best of us, and that requires doing our constitutional duty. This resolution is far from the best we can do.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to a very thoughtful colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), 2 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2956, which would compel a responsible exit of U.S. troops from Iraq.

I voted against giving the President the authority to go to war in Iraq. Two years ago, BRAD MILLER and I introduced legislation to terminate the authorization and to require of the President a comprehensive exit strategy. The President has responded to calls for change by stubbornly adhering to a failed strategy that has cost our Nation dearly in blood, treasure and moral authority. He has rejected Congress's constitutional role in determining policy, and he has ignored the will of the American people. This obstinate, irresponsible, destructive course must not continue.

Now, the President has put great stock in the recent surge in U.S. forces, but the surge seems mainly to have shifted the locus of the fighting. The intent was to create space for Iraq's political leaders to make the hard choices that will lead their country forward, but those hard choices are not being made. We can no longer leave our foreign policy at the mercy of sectarian and political forces we cannot control.

A mission of simply biding time, at great cost in blood and treasure, is not one that we can or should support. We must begin to bring our troops home.

Yet, as I and many others have repeatedly argued, it not only matters that we leave Iraq, but it also matters greatly how we leave. We cannot afford the same mistakes that the Bush administration made in entering Iraq, without a plan for protecting troops, for managing consequences or for giving the Iraqi people every possible chance to succeed.

Therefore, the bill before us would provide the discipline of a timeline to the Bush administration for beginning and completing the termination of combat operations and the redeployment of our troops. It would also compel the development of a comprehensive strategy for managing the redeployment and addressing the challenges that Iraq will continue to present after our troops are gone.

Mr. Speaker, the continued presence of 160,000 American troops in Iraq is not sustainable and does not serve our national interest. It is time not merely to urge but to require a change of course. This legislation does just that, and I urge its passage.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, today President Bush, as required by Congress, has reported on progress made by the Iraqi Government on political and military benchmarks. He reported that the Iraqis have not accomplished any of these goals.

It is time, in fact past time, for the Iraqis to take control of their own future. It is time for the Iraqis to move forward, resolve their internal conflicts and begin the process of national reconciliation.

More than 3,600 Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring freedom

and democracy to Iraq. Our military has performed exceptionally; for that and for their sacrifices, our Nation will be internally grateful.

But without progress by the Iraqis themselves, there is little more that our military can do. And despite the stubbornness of our President to stay the course, it is time for us to bring our troops home.

I am proud to be with the majority in Congress and across America in supporting this responsible plan to redeploy our troops, set a new course in Iraq, and lead our Nation towards greater security here at home and across the world.

I rise in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act and I stand in support of a change in strategy for U.S. involvement in Iraq: one that sets a timetable for prompt and safe withdrawal of our armed forces.

For many of us on the House Floor today this is not the first time we have voted for such a change, or demanded a new plan from the President.

In March, we voted to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq, improve troop readiness, and demand accountability from the administration. The President vetoed our plan.

In May, Congress enacted specific political and military benchmarks for the Iraqi government. By tying the goals to funds for military action in Iraq, we made it clear that progress is a prerequisite for continued assistance by the United States.

Today, President Bush, as required by Congress, reported on progress made by the Iraqi government towards those benchmarks. He reported that the Iraqis have not accomplished any of these goals.

More than 3,600 Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring freedom and democracy to Iraq. Our military has performed exceptionally. They removed a government hostile to the United States and took responsibility for providing enough stability to enable the Iraqi people to establish their own free and independent government. For that and for their sacrifices, our Nation will be eternally grateful.

Yet, as the war enters its fifth year, sectarian violence and failure of political progress has put our troops in a more and more threatening and dangerous situation. This volatility and the President's surge strategy have increased U.S. and Iraqi casualties and injuries.

It is time —well past time—for the Iraqis to take control of their own future. It is time for the Iraqis to move forward to establish an effective system of government, to resolve their internal conflicts, and to begin the process of national reconciliation. Without these actions by the Iraqis themselves, there is little more our military can do. It is time—well past time—for us to bring them home.

On behalf of the American people, we are seeking to do just that. Today we will vote once again to end our military involvement on the frontlines in Iraq and bring our troops home despite the stubbornness of our President to stay the course.

It is my hope that that Republicans will join us in supporting this responsible plan to redeploy our troops and to press the President for a new course in Iraq. As Democrats, we will lead this country towards a more responsible—more strategic path—to end our military involvement in Iraq. In so doing, we remain committed to protect our nation, our people and our strategic interests at home and around the world.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this bill because it is the wrong debate at the wrong place at the wrong time; and most importantly, it sends the wrong message.

It is the wrong debate because it serves no useful purpose. We know this bill will never become law. If it passes, it will be vetoed, and that veto will be sustained. We are wasting the time and trying the patience of the American people for no useful purpose.

It is the wrong place because it is what happens in Iraq, not here, that will determine the outcome of the current struggle. Our forces and those of the Iraqi Government are in a tough fight. We should reinforce them, not undercut them, and we should encourage the Iraqi Government, not abandon it.

It is the wrong time because it is too early to debate the outcome of the current effort in Iraq. I have great respect for the author of this bill, but it is General Petraeus's report and assessment that should guide our deliberations in this body. He has asked us to wait until September before he offers us an assessment of the progress and prospects of the current effort. Having given him a tough job, we owe it to him to adhere to the timeline he has requested.

It is the wrong message, most importantly, because it strengthens rather than weakens our enemies.

□ 1530

They know they cannot defeat our forces, but they can and they do believe they can outlast this Congress. This debate and this bill will only strengthen them in that belief.

By strengthening our enemies, we undercut the best efforts of our forces, the forces of Iraq and the Iraqi Government. The best way to undo the damage that this bill has already done is to defeat it, and I urge my colleagues to do so.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, might I inquire how much time is left on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has 49½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 1 minute at this point to one of our very focused new Members, the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. CHRIS MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

For all that we disagree on here today, we agree on one thing: We all want a stable, independent Iraq. What I can't understand is how anyone can still believe that our continued, open-ended military intervention there will lead to a stable nation. In fact, it's doing the opposite.

The Iraqi Parliament and ministries are in unprecedented disarray. The President's own report to Congress will say that we haven't met any of our political benchmarks there, and an estimated 13,000 Iraqis are dead since the escalation began.

The fact is, as someone much wiser than I said, the Iraqis today are paying wholesale rather than retail for their political decisions. So long as we are the military bodyguard for every major Iraqi political group, so long as we are subsidizing the political decisions of Iraqi political leaders, they will never make the difficult political concessions necessary to create a stable society there.

I support this bill, Mr. Speaker, because not another American soldier should die for a strategy that is unfathomably making Iraq less safe and less stable.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman who started the Iraq Study Group, the gentleman from Virginia, the very distinguished Mr. WOLF.

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise against the resolution, and I rise in support of the Iraq Study Group.

Most Americans favor the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. In fact, most Members of this body also favor the Iraq Study Group, but all would favor its consideration. I have asked the Rules Committee on three different occasions to make the Iraq Study Group recommendations in order, and I have been denied.

Let me say that we ought not blindly follow the White House, nor we ought not blindly follow the Democratic leadership in Congress. The American people have a very low opinion of this institution, as Mr. THORNBERRY just said, because all they see us doing is attacking, dividing, and using political rhetoric.

The American people want us to come together. A majority of your side have said they support the Iraq Study Group. A majority of my side have said they support the Iraq Study Group. Lee Hamilton, Jim Baker, Leon Panetta, and Ed Meese have done an outstanding job. They have 41 experts of all political views that have come together.

This body ought to be voting and debating the Iraq Study Group and not a resolution that is preordained that it will be vetoed.

Let's come together. Let's bring it up for a vote, but to blindly follow the White House or to blindly follow the Democratic leadership that will not give this up, we will continue to have the lowest opinion poll this Congress has ever had. The American people deserve better. The men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan deserve better, and their families deserve better.

The 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group provide a comprehensive blueprint for dealing with the war in Iraq. Its conclusions were the result of consensus, and most people favor implementing the bipartisan panel's recommendations.

Members of the administration, albeit anonymously, have been quoted as saying the ISG is the way to go. Members of the military have looked favorably on the report. And so have both sides of the aisle here in Congress.

H.R. 2574, which would codify the recommendations of the report, and whose lead sponsor is a Democrat, has 58 cosponsors. 34 Republicans are on the bill; and there are 24 Democrats.

Look who served on the panel: Jim Baker, Lee Hamilton, Lawrence Eagleburger, Vernon Jordan, Ed Meese, Leon Panetta, Sandra Day O'Connor, Chuck Robb, Alan Simpson and Bill Perry. Secretary Gates served until being appointed Secretary of Defense.

The panel took nearly 9 months to come up with its 79 recommendations—which were all agreed to unanimously.

The ISG met with military officers, regional experts, academics, journalists and high-level government officials from America and abroad.

Congress should have opportunity to debate—and discuss—the merits of the Iraq Study group's recommendations.

It is not adequate to just blindly follow the whims of the White House or the Democrat Leadership in Congres. We need to be working together toward building a consensus on this issue rather trying to score political points.

The American people expect more. The men and women serving in uniform deserve more. So do their families.

They want to see us the Congress, the administration and the nation working together; not fighting each other.

Implementing the 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group is the one thing we can do that could have an impact.

I have tried three times now to get this Congress to adopt the recommendations of the ISG. Each time my efforts have been rebuffed by the Rules Committee. If we had acted back in January, we wouldn't be here today. I realize the war has created a bitter divide in our country. The ISG allows us to come together.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

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

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, the best way to stop a disastrous war would have been not to have started it, but the American people know that, it having been started, we did have a moral obligation to the Iraqi people to give them a reasonable chance to form a government. But after 4 years, after 3,600 lives, after $450 billion of American money sunk into the sands of Iraq, that moral obligation has been fulfilled in spades.

Now we have a moral obligation to our sons, a moral obligation to our daughters, a moral obligation to our husbands and wives. The moral obligation to Iraq has been completed. The moral obligation to our families now needs to be honored, and it could only be honored by passage of this resolution.

Now, people have said that we can't just leave; we need a way forward. There is only one way forward to security, to reduce the threats from the Mideast, and that is to break our addiction to oil from that region of the world.

Take one-half of the $80 billion and put it in energy efficiency, we'll give you security. Pass this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to the chairwoman of the Small Business Committee, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ).

(Ms. VELAZQUEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956. We must support and protect our troops, and the best way to do that is to bring them home.

The American people want the troops out of harm's way. The White House has not met its own benchmarks, and with this resolution, the Iraqi leaders, for once, will know that we mean business.

Mr. Speaker, the pain and suffering felt because of this war is unconscionable. New York has lost over a 150 brave young souls; yet, for this President, there's no ending to this war.

There is a smarter way. Under H.R. 2956, our troops start to come home in 120 days. Over 70 percent of Americans want us out of Iraq. Democracy is about elected officials listening to the people. Democracy is what we are trying to teach Iraqis, how to run their own democracy. By voting to bring our troops home, we can show them.

The American people want this war to be over. Put your faith and trust in them. Choose democracy. Choose a way forward. Vote for this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to a leader on our foreign policy issues, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF).

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, when the President announced in January that he intended to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq, he sought to betray the increase in American combat forces as a necessary precondition for Iraq's government to make the political compromises necessary to prevent Iraq's civil war from spiraling completely out of control. In that speech, the President pledged to hold the Iraqi leadership accountable and to demand progress in two main areas: political reconciliation and security.

Now, more than 6 months later, it's unfortunate but also undeniable that little sustainable progress has been made on either front. Even as we speak, the administration is downplaying the significance of an interim report on the effect of the surge in Iraq.

On the security front, the heroism and sacrifices of American forces has caused a drop in sectarian killings, leading to an overall drop in the number of Iraqi deaths, but the reduction of Iraqi casualties has come with a horrific increase in the loss of our own troops. More than 600 Americans have been killed since January.

Moreover, as American troops leave cities that are quieted with their own blood, there is every indication that Iraqi troops will not be able to sustain the calm. If the past is any indicator, insurgents and militias are merely waiting for us to exhaust ourselves and move on before returning, and Iraqi security forces will be powerless to stop them.

When President Bush announced in January that he intended to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq, he sought to portray the increase in American combat forces as a necessary precondition for Iraq's government to make the political compromises necessary to prevent Iraq's civil war from spiraling completely out of control.

In that speech, the President pledged to hold the Iraqi leadership accountable and to demand progress in two main areas: political reconciliation and security.

Now more than six months later it is unfortunate, but also undeniable that little sustainable progress has been made on either front. Even as we speak, the Administration is downplaying the significance of an interim report on the effect of the "surge" in Iraq.

On reconciliation, the Iraqi Government has failed to meet any of the political benchmarks endorsed by the President in January and which this Congress mandated earlier this spring. These political goals are the best indicator of the prospects for reconciliation in Iraq and, tragically, all signs indicate that political reconciliation has been non-existent.

The Iraqi Parliament has yet to begin consideration of the oil law or an associated revenue-sharing law. Given the disparate geographical distribution of Iraq's oil reserves, these laws are essential if Iraq is to have any hope of remaining a united country.

More alarming, is the lack of progress in healing the Sunni-Shiite rift. Of greatest importance, is the need to reverse some of the more draconian edicts of the postwar de-Baathification orders promulgated by former Coalition Provisional Authority chief Paul Bremer. These decrees removed any incentive for Sunnis to participate in creating a better future for Iraq. Other laws—to disarm militias and to grant amnesty—are still being formulated, and most observers believe that the prospect of disarming militias is so remote that it will not be possible in the foreseeable future.

On the security front, the heroism and sacrifice of American force have caused a decline in sectarian killings and suicide bombings, leading to an overall drop in the number of Iraqi civilian deaths. But the reduction of Iraqi casualties has come with a horrific increase in the loss of our own troops—more than 600 Americans have been killed since January.

Moreover, as American troops leave cities they have quieted with their own blood, there is every indication that Iraqi troops will not be able to sustain the calm. If the past is any indicator, insurgents and militias are merely waiting for us to exhaust ourselves and move

on before returning—and Iraqi security forces will be powerless to stop them.

There has been one very positive development—in al Anbar province, Sunni tribal leaders have decided that al Qaeda's indiscriminate killing makes them a bigger problem than we are, and they have taken up arms against our common foe. This alliance of American forces and former insurgents is desirable and should be encouraged elsewhere. But, like most marriages of convenience, it is not sustainable and cannot form the bedrock of a secure Iraq or reconciliation among Iraqi sects.

For almost two years, I have been calling for a change in our mission in Iraq—from policing a civil war to training, containment and counter-terrorism. This necessitates a responsible redeployment of our combat forces from Iraq, and I believe that this bill does an excellent job of providing a framework for that redeployment, while still giving our armed forces the flexibility that they need to respond to contingencies.

Iraq's future must be decided by the Iraqi people and that solution must come from political reconciliation. Every day that we maintain our forces in the crossfire between warring sects is another opportunity for hatreds to harden and radicals to consolidate their grip on Iraq's ethnic and sectarian communities. We should change our mission now, and begin the withdrawal of our combat forces.

In planning for the inevitable withdrawal, we must recognize that a poorly executed departure could result in an escalation of civil war violence as Iraqi sects compete for power. As we draw down our forces, we must make every effort to prevent a magnification of this catastrophic violence. In particular, we must not compound the error of the lack of pre-invasion planning, with an equally tragic failure to adequately anticipate the post-occupation environment.

Mr. Speaker, it is long past time to begin to end the war in Iraq. I support this bill and urge its passage by the House today.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to a former member of our Armed Services Committee, my friend and colleague from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, over the recess I had the opportunity to have several public hearings back home, and Iraq was one on everyone's mind. The overwhelming consensus was that we need a new strategy in Iraq, a view shared by national security experts and illustrated by continued violence in the region. Today, we can chart a new path so that we can finally bring our troops home.

Americans know the Bush strategy isn't working, and today's Iraq status report confirms the lack of progress. The Iraqi Government has failed to promote political reconciliation, and our military is paying the price. Our troops have done a superb job, but they were not sent to Iraq to referee a civil war.

Today's bill requires our military to start redeploying out of Iraq within 120 days, to be completed by April 1, 2008. We will not abandon Iraq, but we must implement a new strategy based on political, economic and diplomatic initiatives.

I want to thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership on this measure, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to a member of the Appropriations Committee, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from New Jersey.

I rise in support of this bill. I can't believe the argument in opposition to this bill, that we should continue to stay the course, because this is the policy that has led us in the wrong direction for four straight years. This has been the worst foreign policy fiasco in American history.

Now we're being told that we're there to fight al Qaeda. There were no al Qaeda in Iraq when we went into Iraq. Saddam had nothing to do with 9/11. Now there are about 5,000 there out of a population of 26 million.

We have trained hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. Many of them we've given them more training than we've given our own troops.

This policy is not worthy of the sacrifice of our troops and their military families. It's leading us down a dead-end street. It's time that it was changed.

Mr. Speaker, we are told that we need to train the Iraqis more. All we are doing is equipping and training them in order to kill each other in a civil war that I'm afraid is going to be inevitable.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), a distinguished member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, just today, while debating this new Iraq withdrawal bill, reports continue to surface that al Qaeda is now restructuring its power.

Like several other recent actions on the part of Democrats recently, this bill communicates to jihadist enemies that we are weakening and confirms their belief that they have a critical advantage over free people in the world because their will is far stronger than ours and they need only to persevere to break our resolve.

Osama bin Laden himself has stated, ''The whole world is watching this war and the two adversaries. It's either victory and glory, or misery and humiliation.''

Mr. Speaker, if Democrats continue to insist that the war in Iraq has nothing to do with the war on terrorism, then I wish they would explain that to the terrorists because they still don't understand, and they are continuing to be fundamentally committed to the destruction of the Western world and to killing us wherever they find us.

Mr. Speaker, the premise behind this bill is that we can have peace tomorrow so long as we are willing to surrender today. Unfortunately, with jihadist terrorism, just the opposite is true. If we surrender to terrorism today, it will only bring greater horror and suffering to all of humanity tomorrow.

So vital questions arise to those who would continue to demand that we surrender Iraq to terrorists. Are they also willing to allow the citizens and families of this Nation to face jihad and what may become a nuclear jihad here at home? And what will we tell our children when that day comes?

Mr. Speaker, defeating radical jihad in Iraq and throughout the world will require the support, perseverance, patience, wisdom and prayers of the American people. But for the sake of those people and for our children, for our future generation and for people across the world who still hope for freedom, I pray that the Members of this body would heed that warning echoing down through history.

There is no substitute for victory.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy.

It's not too early. It's too late, too late because the President's party has enabled these disastrous policies. And listening to some on the other side of the aisle, there are people still disconnected from reality.

But each day their congressional support is slowly crumbling as evidence mounts of the costs of failure. It's not just 10 billions of dollars a month. It's more lives lost and thousands of hopes and dreams shattered.

□ 1545

Even those of us who opposed this from the beginning understand that 300,000 American soldiers and contractors cannot leave overnight. But that's no excuse not to start now, as rapidly and as responsibly as possible, to get our people out of crossfire of what is now a religious civil war. Our soldiers have done all that they can do and can be expected of them.

I call on the doubters to join us in supporting the strongest most direct measure possible, not just to send the President a message, but rein him in and bring our soldiers home from this nightmare.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY).

Ms. HOOLEY. I thank my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, today is not cause for celebration, nor is it a time for high rhetoric. Instead, today is a moment of conscience. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent, 3,600 of our best and brightest have been called upon to sacrifice in the unforgiving sands of Iraq.

When in a hole, it is best to stop digging. We must make plans to protect those we can best protect, to institute a rational response capability

within the region. But first we must make immediate plans to disengage ourselves from Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to find consensus on this issue. We owe it to the brave men and women that have sacrificed and will continue to sacrifice until we find and implement resolution.

Once we have disengaged ourselves from the Iraqi civil war, maybe, with patience, dialogue and an open ear, we may find new relationships within the Middle East to help our partners secure the peace we have thus far found so elusive.

Let us renew our commitment to finding a solution for Middle East conflict. It is time we used our heads and hearts rather than fists and force.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting once again for changing course in Iraq.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to our thoughtful friend and colleague from the State of Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, let me just very briefly outline exactly what we are after in this bill.

First of all, this is a responsible effort for redeployment so that we can refocus and fight the war on terror. The situation in Iraq is a civil war compounded by civil wars that have been going on ever since Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, Isaac, Ishmael, Esau, Mohammed and his son-in-law, which has broken into the Shi'as and the Sunnis; hundreds of thousands of years, folks.

None of the people from Iraq came to this country and asked, please come over and pump in $500 billion, 3,600 of the lives of your precious sons and daughters to make a democracy for us. That was a decision that was made counter to the authorization in the first place. It was a go against weapons of mass destruction.

It is responsible. It is focused. We need to do it, and I urge passage of this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER).

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I spent the Fourth of July recess traveling to Pakistan and to Iraq.

I came away with a couple of observations. First in Pakistan, our allies in the war on terror, the Pakistanis, have great concern about an early withdrawal from Iraq, because they saw first hand, after the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, when America left that region, left Afghanistan to uncertainty and chaos, what happened was the rise of the Taliban, an extremist group, that then gave basis to al Qaeda to be able to plan and plot the 9/11 attacks on America.

So the Pakistanis are extremely concerned about an early withdrawal. Our allies around the world are concerned. The word of America is at risk. Our allies are watching what we do here in the United States Congress and what America does.

Second, traveling to Iraq, I came away with some positive reports, not only from our commanders, but listening to the Iraqi general, who is in charge of the national police. He said that the Shia, the Sunni and the Kurds have come together as Iraqis, standing up a national police force that's fighting to throw out the negative elements that are in Iraq today. They are standing shoulder-to-shoulder, the Shia, Sunni and Kurds. Our folks also told us that they need more time to train the police, the security of the Iraqis.

Talking to our soldiers was the most powerful information I came away with. One of the sergeants in our Special Forces told us something very significant. Right about now, he is saddling up, he is getting ready to go out on a dangerous mission in Iraq tonight to either kill al Qaeda to take down a production facility for IEDs. He said to me, he said to the group of us that was there, we cannot leave Iraq prematurely because chaos will ensue, and what we will find is that the terrorists will be in the streets of America.

So listening to that powerful statement from somebody who is putting his life on the line, every single night, that's powerful information. Those are powerful words.

We have to allow this surge, not just to last for 3 weeks, but to go for 3 months. Let it go. Let us vote down this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, my friend from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Chairman SKELTON's bill to bring American forces home from Iraq and to begin to end this tragic war, a war borne of lies, ignorance and arrogance. The cost of this war has been high to our country, to our economy but, most importantly, to our men and women in uniform, for they have taken all of the sacrifice for our President's decision to take this country to war in Iraq.

Our military responded honorably to the President's decision, but he failed to honor their sense of duty and their courage with a plan that was designed to succeed. His failed policy has cost their families, their communities, and most tragically, it has cost them their limbs and their lives.

The war in Iraq cannot be won, and it cannot be lost. It can only be brought to an end. The President continues to display both sheer arrogance and tragic ignorance as he refuses to change policy. Over and over again, it says the same thing, to stay the same course, to give them more time and that success is just around the corner.

The American people realize that staying the course in Iraq was not a plan, and it is not going to work. I have known, as many of my Democratic colleagues have, that staying the course is not acceptable. We honor our troops when we have the courage to bring them home and end this war.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, a Member of the Ways and Means committee from the State of Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues suggested earlier that debating the war as we are today is breaking the will of the American people.

On the contrary, it's the people's will that is breaking down the wall of a tragically mistaken policy. It has become painfully obvious that the White House is incapable of changing course in Iraq.

The Bush administration's talking points about the situation change from week to week, but the fundamental strategy remains the same. The President has determined our troops will remain in Iraq no matter what. The reality is that the government of Iraq is not meeting the benchmark.

Six months into the surge, there is no indication that the Iraqis are coming together to make the political decisions necessary to end the sectarian violence that's tearing the country apart. They are unlikely to do so as long as the U.S. military commitment remains open-ended.

We need to change course. Support this bill.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is left on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has 38½ minutes remaining.

The gentleman from California has 23 minutes remaining.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to one of our thoughtful new Members from Florida (Mr. MAHONEY).

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I am rising today in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. The time has come to stop this senseless policy of using our brave men and women in uniform as cops policing a religious civil war, and it's time for our country to rededicate ourselves to winning the war on terror.

The data is in. The facts are irrefutable in and the conclusion clearly demonstrates that the President's continued resolve to engage in nation building in Iraq has made America weaker and has put our Nation in greater peril from terrorist attack. It is time that we stop asking our brave sons and daughters to give the ultimate sacrifice in support of the President's failed policies.

It is time for the President to listen to his own advisors and the American people. It is time for the President to admit mistakes he has made and for him to show leadership by changing direction. It is time for the President to

honor our service men and women by rebuilding our military and by using our finest fighting force the world has ever known to bring Osama bin Laden to justice, to search out and destroy terrorists and to punish the nations that support terror.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished Member of the Ways and Means committee, our friend from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, our men and women in the military have done everything that has been asked of them, and it's time for a new direction.

The reason we're here is because the Republican party never asked a question of the administration for all those years, not one question. They forfeited their oversight responsibilities.

Remember the briefings in the well of this House; we know where the weapons of mass destruction are; according to the Secretary of Defense, they are in south Baghdad; we were going to be welcomed as liberators; the insurgency, as the Vice President stated it, is in its last throws; and finally, mission accomplished? Now we hear: But just give us more time. Stay the course.

If we had asked some questions here along the way, and not been subservient to the White House, we wouldn't find ourselves where we are today, funeral upon funeral, 26,000 Americans wounded. Yet we are told by the White House, just give us more time for this policy to take root.

How much more time? Vote for this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to Mr. PEARCE, the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we are told today that it's time to refocus on the war on terror. Yet as I read this bill, and I would encourage each one of you to go online and read H.R. 2956, I see no refocus on the war on terror.

I see nothing in H.R. 2956 which describes the threat from radical jihad. I see no plan.

We are told that we need to communicate with the White House, that we need to send a bold message to the President. I am sorry, he's right down the street. It's the people who are causing terror, worldwide terror, that the communication needs to be sent to.

Now, I can't tell you exactly what our troops are feeling as we debate these measures.

I can tell you that I was in Vietnam flying missions in Vietnam at the time that Jane Fonda gave aid and comfort to our enemy, and a time that this Congress was withdrawing support from that war. And I can tell you what soldiers at that time felt. They felt dismay. They felt betrayal. They felt like we had been led down a path.

If this were really an attempt by our majority party to deal with the situation that they are concerned about, it should have an immediate withdrawal date. But it lacks that because it's a political tool rather than an attempt to refocus on the war on terror.

I can tell you that it does not ask key questions, key questions like, how will unilateral withdrawal prevent al Qaeda, Hezbollah and other terrorist operatives already in Iraq from establishing robust training facilities from which to plan and execute additional strikes against the United States?

It fails to answer the question that both Israel and Jordan have asked when they said that unilateral withdrawal, much like the Democrats' plan, would have a devastating consequence on their countries and the region as a whole.

What impact will our unilateral withdrawal from Iraq have on the safety of regional allies, such as Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait? Those questions go unasked and unaddressed in H.R. 2956, because this is not a plan to refocus the war on terror. This is a plan to withdraw and hope that we can retreat home without anyone following us.

It just won't happen that way. The terrorists will come with us as we retreat.

I urge defeat of H.R. 2956.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to our friend and colleague, the hard-working new Member from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

□ 1600

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, back in February when this Congress started the 110th, there was a proposal up here, a resolution that passed with mostly Democrat support, very few Republicans, to say we supported the troops but we opposed the surge or the escalation. Since that time, we have put 20,000 or 30,000 more troops into Iraq, and since that time we have had some of the deadliest months that we have incurred in this failed war in the Middle East.

As time has gone on, we have seen Senators VOINOVICH; LAMAR ALEXANDER from my home State; LUGAR; and others on the Republican side in the Senate come forth and say we need a change of direction. The handwriting has been on the wall in both cloakrooms. The handwriter got to the Democratic cloakroom a lot sooner than apparently the handwriter got to the Republican cloakroom. Either that, or the optometrist hasn't made it over to the other side. But the handwriting is on the wall, and in the interim there are American men and women dying needlessly. Over 3,600 have died; many, many, many, many more casualties, and the cost to this country will be great.

While I was home during the home workweek, I saw a lady who told me her son has been at Desert Storm. He was still in the military. He had been in Iraq once before. And she told me he told her, Mother, I am proud to fight for my country. I have done it twice. But there is no purpose over there, there is no reason to be over there. We need to come home. I have heard it over and over and over again from the mothers of the soldiers who come home with testimony to our failed foreign policy.

How many, how many, how many more must die? How many more limbs must be lost before the handwriting on the wall in the Republican cloakroom is read? I ask you to look in your own hearts. Think of the soldiers as your children, they are your constituents, and help redeploy them. We are not saying in this proposal that we come home entirely. We keep troops for certain causes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to others in the second person.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from California, Mr. MIKE THOMPSON, 1 minute.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker and Members, our strategy in Iraq isn't working. It wasn't working 3 years ago, and it won't be working another year from now. This isn't about defeat; it is about reality.

Our troops have done a fantastic job. But to risk more lives, more wounded, and to spend more than the half trillion dollars we have already spent far exceeds any gain we can expect.

The best thing to do is to get our troops out, and get them out immediately, and to make the Iraqis take control of their country. But, today, I will vote for this bill which is a realistic shift in strategy that every Member should be able to support.

Our focus should be on protecting our home front, stabilizing Afghanistan, and stamping out terrorism across the globe. And we need to start looking ahead by developing a containment plan to keep Iraq's civil war from spilling over into other countries throughout the region. Mr. Speaker, that is the only way to achieve victory.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlelady from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE).

Mrs. DRAKE. A March 2007 Los Angeles Times editorial posed the question: ''Do we really need a General Pelosi? Too many lives are at stake to allow Members of Congress to play the role of Eisenhower or Lincoln.''

How unfortunate that less than a month after the fifth and final brigade of this surge effort has arrived in Iraq we sit here once again prepared to put bad politics in front of sound policy and undercut that mission, putting the lives of our troops, our coalition partners, and millions of Iraqis at risk.

Once again, the leadership of this institution wants to play general, so it chooses to circumvent the committee process to rush a hastily written piece of legislation to the House floor, one that has no chance of becoming law.

And so the question that I and many Americans have is: Why?

You can find the answer in today's Washington Times. According to this body's majority leader, we are here because ''if we don't do anything, these groups,'' meaning MoveOn and affiliates, ''will feel like we haven't done anything.''

So that's it. We are here to appease MoveOn.org. Where is the policy? Where is the plan? Are we to believe that this bill will bring an end to violence in Iraq? Are we to believe that our withdrawal will make our Nation or the world any safer? Thus, politics replaces policy. We are a Nation at war against Islamic terrorists who have no intention of giving up the fight. We must defend this Nation. We cannot afford to play politics. This legislation carries no plan for securing Iraq or the Middle East, only politics.

Mr. Speaker, we have authorized our military to execute this surge and to report to us in September on its status. Why should we cut the rug out from under them now? Our troops will not give up on us; let's not give up on them. I urge rejection of this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to one of the leaders of our 30-something younger members, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK), 3 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend from the Garden State.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I will point to this L.A. Times editorial since now the L.A. Times is an authority on this issue. The newspaper said it reluctantly endorsed the U.S. troop surge when it began. But at the bottom it says: ''We feel that the time has come now for us to leave Iraq.'' That is the L.A. Times.

I also want to point out another thing as we talk about this redeployment, a responsible redeployment, the act that is up before the House right now that we are considering. I just want to make sure the Members of the House know exactly what they are doing, because when they get back home in their districts and they start talking to the heroes and sheroes that have been deployed two to three times and talk to Americans about why they can't meet the needs that they have to meet here domestically, I want them to reflect on this:

I want them to look at the fact that you have $120 billion a year that we are spending in Iraq; per month, $10 billion; per week, $2.3 billion; per day, $329 million; per hour, $13 million since we have been here on the floor, Mr. Speaker; per minute, which I only have two, $228,000. And you have to look at per second, as I take a breath, $3,816.

Also, I want to point out to the Members here, Mr. Speaker, the last time we passed a measure on behalf of the men and women in harm's way and to send the message to the Iraqi Government, they can go on vacation and they don't meet and they don't do the things that we have put forth as benchmarks that they have to meet in a bipartisan way, then why should we reward bad behavior?

And I have this picture here, Mr. Speaker, of when the President called a lot of the Members of the minority here in this House down to the White House and they had a meeting and the President came out, mikes and everything, not one Democrat here, saying that we stand with the President, this is what the minority president said: ''We stand with the President in not overriding his veto.''

I want to know, Mr. Speaker, how many times the Members of the minority party are going to go down to the White House and stand on the schoolhouse door of allowing us to move in a new direction. The American people are way ahead of us on this issue.

I am so happy that Chairman SKELTON has brought this to the House floor. I am hoping that we have a bipartisan vote on it. I am encouraging every Member of the House, and I do mean every Member of the House, even my good friends on the other side of the aisle, to vote for a commonsense new direction. And I think that is very, very important as we look at this responsible redeployment act.

Once again, it takes courage to be a Member of the House. It takes also leadership to be a Member of the House. And some of us have to go see the wizard and pick up both of those values that we all hold and that we should hold. So I encourage you to cast an affirmative vote on the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to Dr. GINGREY, the gentleman from Georgia, 3 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the ranking member for yielding. He would make a great Commander in Chief.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to salute my close friend and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Chairman IKE SKELTON. I hold him in the highest regard and I admire him dearly, though I must oppose his bill and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. This bill does not seek to clarify our objectives or a path to victory. It does not offer an alternative to the current plan being implemented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker.

Nowhere to be found are any new ideas or solutions or any talk of curbing violence or compelling political reconciliation. Why? Because there is no pressure on the Democrats to put forth any meaningful ideas. They know that this bill is dead on arrival. The President has vowed to veto it, and rightly so. This is a defeatist measure that serves only to placate the Democrats' liberal base.

Mr. Speaker, a few things about this plan immediately jump out to me. According to this legislation, a date certain withdrawal is to commence 120 days after the enactment of this bill. So why then does the bill wait another 2 months before asking the President to formulate a strategy? It is like asking a quarterback to throw Brother Ben passes until the offensive coordinator can come up with a game plan.

Essentially, this bill says that after our troops have packed their bags and have begun to come home, or maybe to deploy to Okinawa per the Murtha plan, then we will receive this master plan detailing how to provide for the security interests in Iraq.

As a physician, that is akin to calling a patient in for surgery before you have done the exam, yanking somebody's heart out before you have inspected the coronaries. In short, Mr. Speaker, it is a recipe for disaster.

Mr. Speaker, the last troop surge deployed just 3 weeks ago, hardly a significant time period for us to be here today judging the plan. However, I do believe Congress should engage in an ongoing, rational dialogue outlining the expectations of both our troops and the Iraqi Government and the security forces. Nobody is here suggesting that we shouldn't. And we will do it in September when we get the Petraeus report based on that report. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot capitulate to extremist views and sinister plans, which is what this bill would do by sending a message to the terrorists that capitulation begins in 120 days.

I urge my colleagues, oppose this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina, who is the chairman of the Budget Committee and also a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, a friend, my colleague, Mr. SPRATT.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution.

I will be frank to say that I think the time lines are too tight, the details are too sketchy; but I recognize this resolution for what it is. It is not a general order or master plan for the redeployment of our troops in Iraq. This is simply a way to frame the debate with the President over how we can most effectively reduce and redeploy the 170,000 troops now on duty in Iraq. We are, after all, in the 5th year of this war.

So far, 3,611 Americans have given their lives, 27,000 have been wounded in action. We have spent $450 billion through May, and continue spending now at a rate of $10 billion a month. Had we the foresight 3 years ago, 4 years ago to see these costs, the War Powers Resolution would not have secured 100 votes in this House.

Opponents of this resolution claim that we are encroaching on the powers of the President as the Commander in Chief. Those who think that should read the resolution and read it carefully.

First of all, it does not call for an immediate withdrawal. It allows 4 months for the reduction in forces to begin. Second, it does not call for withdrawal at all. It calls for a reduction of the

number of troops deployed or transition to a limited mission. Third, it spells out the limited missions. These include force protection, diplomatic protection, pursuit of terrorists, training of Iraqi forces. The resolution, far from interfering, defers to the President, allows the Pentagon to decide just what is the minimum force level for the mission it specifies, provided it justifies its decision.

For the past 3 years, the President has assured us that we would stand down American troops as soon as Iraqi troops stood up. Well, that is essentially what this resolution does; 135 Iraqi battalions have been trained. Many may lack things like logistics to make them freestanding fighting units, but surely this is a capacity we can supply over the next 6 months or even longer through embedded advisers who will remain after April 2008.

This resolution sends the Iraqi troops the message that we are not in their country, Iraq, indefinitely, and that the day is fast approaching when they must take responsibility for the security of their own country.

□ 1615

For the past 2 years the President has told us that benchmarks or milestones have been laid down for the Iraqi government to accomplish. This week we received a progress report on those metrics showing few measurable gains.

So here's our dilemma: Our presence in Iraq, with 170,000 troops, allows the Iraqi government an ability to operate, the freedom of action it would not otherwise enjoy absent our support. But the Iraqi government has exploited that security to avoid doing the very steps that are necessary to its becoming a true government of national reconciliation, which commands the allegiance of all Iraqis.

Yesterday the Deputy Director for Analysis in the Office of National Intelligence told us, ''current political trends are moving the country in a negative direction.'' One way to make Iraqi leaders take the reins of their own government, establish their government, is to announce reduction of our forces in front-line combat troops and their transition to a limited mission and make it clear that our commitment to their country is not openended.

Three or 4 months ago, we were told by the administration it was going to undertake a new strategy, a new plan for securing Iraq called a surge, concentrated primarily in Baghdad. We now have the early results from that. We were told we would know in 3 or 4 months. Three or 4 months have passed, and we've only seen casualties increase. There have been some successes, sure, and we're thankful for them. And I hope it succeeds. But we need a new strategy. We do not have one, and this calls for a rethinking of everything. And for these reasons I will vote for this resolution, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Illinois who is the chairman of the Democratic Caucus, Mr. EMANUEL.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, this morning the President noted with a report that we were at the starting line; 3,600 American lives, $485 billion spent, $10 billion a month, 5 years into the war. If that is the starting line, then I ask you, what is the cost to get to the finish line? If the President describes today that we are at the starting line, I ask you, what is the cost to get to the finish line after all those lives?

That would not be the words I would choose to tell the American families who've lost their loved ones. That would not be the words I would choose to tell the people who've put up close to a half a trillion dollars that we are at the starting line after 5 years, and our reputation sullied around the world.

Our American men and women in uniform have done brilliantly. Everything we have asked them to do, they have done. They have defeated an army. They have seized a nation, deposed a dictator, taken a castle. There is not one thing we've asked our men and women in uniform and their leadership to do. The only thing they've asked is that their civilian leadership do what they have done, and they were let down. They have won the war, and this administration has failed in the occupation.

Now, President Kennedy once said, ''to govern is to choose; choices are between bad and worse.'' And my colleagues on the other side are not all wrong. They fear that if we leave precipitously, there could be real violence, worse than we're seeing; not totally wrong.

Those of us have said, after 4 or 5 years of more money, more troops, more time and more of the same, at a certain point, you have to understand that there are costs to that because today we see in the report that, in fact, al Qaeda is reconfiguring and stronger than ever. There are costs to staying, and there are costs to leaving.

So what are the choices we all have to make? They are choices between bad and worse. There are those who want to stay and fight the war in Iraq, and there are those of us who want to fight al Qaeda. This is a road to fighting al Qaeda.

There are those who want to police a civil war between Sunnis and Shia, and those of us who believe in fighting the war on terror. That is the choice. Neither is easy. There are consequences to both, but all of us recognize that.

But after 5 years, 3,600 American lives, $485 billion, you have to ask yourself, are we getting stronger, or are we diminishing our reputation and our power?

As our military's stretched, as we see al Qaeda reconfiguring and stronger than ever before, that is the choice before us. And I do agree; it's not a free choice. But staying blindly, without ever having asked a question, only more money, more time, more troops and more of the same with no other clear policy has consequences to America.

In that sense, as we measure the Iraqi progress, as the President noted today, there are also ways to measure our progress.

We were told the insurgency was in its last throes. Not happening. We were told, at another point, they were placing democracy is the Mideast. Not happening. We were told that we were going to find WMD, weapons of mass destruction. Not happening. At every point that this administration has put a benchmark down for itself, it is not happening.

There are consequences to moving just down this path that has been traveled. Too costly. It is time for a new direction for America and Iraq.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield to Mr. MCKEON, the gentleman from California, for a unanimous consent request.

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

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the motion being considered. Yet again, I find myself standing in defense of our military leaders and our honorable men and women in uniform. Today's ill-conceived resolution is another example of partisan maneuvering by the Democrats. I think it is important to remind my colleagues exactly what is being sought by this resolution and the negative effect it will have. While our troops are fighting in Iraq, Democratic leadership is attempting to draw attention from any signs of progress and ignore the sound strategy that we laid out earlier this year. What happened to the promise of a New Way Forward in Iraq?

General Petraeus has honorably taken on this leadership role in this war with the support of Democrats in the other body, and yet, here today the Democrats seek to publicly undermine him. It is shameful. He was given a job to do—to execute the Baghdad Security Plan—and he is doing it alongside our troops. The plan is still underway and today's interim report indicates a reduction in violent attacks in Baghdad. We should be standing with him, with our plan, and allowing for its full implementation. Instead, however, we see today the real Democratic agenda in this resolution: the truth is the Democrats aren't interested in whether or not the security plan will work.

Mr. Speaker, I question whether this resolution would do more harm than good. A precipitous withdrawal of troops would seriously endanger our soldiers and would signal defeat to our enemies around the world.

Mr. Speaker this House speaks loudest when it speaks with purpose, and voting to remove troops before receiving the report in September, that we asked for, is contradictory and bad policy. This bill does not honor the sacrifice and dedication of our troops who have fought to implement the plan we approved.

We should never miss the opportunity in this House to act in the best interest of our foreign

policy and our men and women in harm's way. We should—at every opportunity—reject undermining the faith and dedicated work of our brave men and women in uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in opposing this dangerous resolution. It is the duty of this House and of this Congress and of this Nation to give our men and women the support they need to see this conflict through. We have allocated a timeframe for our new General, and now we must allow our military leaders the opportunity to prevail.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words. There's a movie out called ''Groundhog Day'' in which the same thing happens over and over for a particularly long period of time.

We've had this debate once recently. We're having it again today, and I understand the leadership on the other side intends to have these conversations once a week for the next 4 weeks. I don't anticipate that much different information will be said.

I have the profoundest respect for the chairman of the committee and the man whose name is on this resolution, but I'm going to have to oppose it.

Much of what gets said here today, Mr. Speaker, is doublespeak. It's doublespeak to talk about the failure to get benchmark progress on the civilian scene, on the political scene in Iraq, and yet to strip $2 billion out of the State Department's funding request, part of the CR, to strip another $500 million out of the 2008 appropriations request, money that would go to do the nation-building part, the provincial reconstruction team part in Iraq, and then to call it a failure. That's doublespeak in a classic sense.

It's doublespeak, Mr. Speaker, to talk about how wonderful our troops are, and they are. They are magnificent, and even more magnificent are the families who support them and let them do what they do. And then to turn around and say that the implementation of this policy has failed, but somehow they've not failed as a result of that; I think that's doublespeak as well.

It's also doublespeak to say the current policy says we're going to have a report in 60 days from David Petraeus, the right man at the right spot to give us that report, and then vote on a resolution that says 120 days we're going to start getting out, when we'll have the better information in September, in 60 days. That's doublespeak. It's disingenuous, I believe, to do it that way.

The majority has the ability to get out of Iraq today. And all of the talk about failure, all of the talk about the lost lives, all of the talk about the costs, by extending this another 120 days, as they intend to do, leaves additional lives at risk. And somehow to me, that just seems to be at counter purposes of what the conversation is.

I encourage my colleagues to vote this resolution down.

Mr. SKELTON. May I inquire, Mr. Speaker, of the time remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). The gentleman from Missouri has 23 minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend from California (Mr. BACA).

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

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a veteran who served in the 101st and 82nd Airborne Division in support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act.

This war is a failure, and it's time to bring back our troops. We can no longer stay the course.

Mr. Speaker, the President's policy has been a complete failure. We have lost too many lives. There are too many wounded who will never have normal lives.

We're proud of our troops and the service they have provided to our country. But our troops are now trapped in the middle of a civil war that we cannot end.

This is something that the Iraqi people must do for themselves. Our military presence in Iraq is not making our country safer. Instead, the war has taken the lives of 3,610 soldiers.

In my district alone, we have lost 13 brave men and women, and when I see their faces and their families that have to deal with these individuals that have lost their lives, we're proud of them, but they've lost their lives, and the families who continue to suffer.

CA–43'S FALLEN SOLDIERS IN IRAQ

RIALTO

Staff Sgt. Jorge A. Molina Bautista: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 37 years old. Died: May 23, 2004 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 1st Light Armored Reconnaisance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Incident: Killed by hostile fire in Anbar province.

Spec. Luis D. Santos: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 20 years old. Died: June 8, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo. Incident: Died of injuries sustained when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Humvee during combat operations in Buritz.

Spec. Victor A. Garcia: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 22 years old. Died: July 1, 2007 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), Fort Lewis, Wash. Incident: Killed by enemy small arms fire in Baghdad.

Pfc. William A. Farrar Jr.: Hometown: Redlands, California, U.S. Age: 20 years old. Died: May 11, 2007 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 127th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Darmstadt, Germany. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb device detonated near his vehicle in Iskandariyah. Son of Rialto Police Captain Tony Farrar.

BLOOMINGTON

Cpl. Joseph A. Blanco: Hometown: Bloomington, California, U.S. Age: 25 years old. Died: April 11, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Tex. Incident: Died of injuries sustained when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Bradley fighting vehicle and he subsequently came under small arms fire during combat operations in Taji.

FONTANA

Lance Cpl. Fernando S. Tamayo: Hometown: Fontana, California, U.S. Age: 19 years old. Died: December 21, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, Calif. Incident: Died while conducting combat operations in Anbar Province.

Sgt. Bryan A. Brewster: Hometown: Fontana, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: May 5, 2006 in Operation Enduring Freedom. Unit: Army, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), Fort Drum N.Y. Incident: Killed when his CH–47 Chinook helicopter crashed during combat operations east of Abad, Afghanistan.

SAN BERNARDINO

Cpl. Nicanor Alvarez: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 22 years old. Died: August 21, 2004 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Incident: Killed by enemy action in Anbar province.

Pfc. Alex Oceguera: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 19 years old. Died: October 31, 2006 in Operation Enduring Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb detonated near his vehicle in Wygal Valley, Afghanistan.

Cpl. Sean R. Grilley: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: October 16, 2003 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky. Incident: Killed while negotiating with Iraqis congregating near a mosque after curfew in Karbala when the Iraqis opened fire.

Spec. Timothy D. Watkins: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: October 15, 2005 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Bradley fighting vehicle during combat operations in Ar Ramadi.

ONTARIO

Spec. Jose R. Perez: Hometown: Ontario, California, U.S. Age: 21 years old. Died: October 18, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Baumholder, Germany. Incident: Killed by enemy small arms fire in Ramadi.

Sgt. 1st Class Rudy A. Salcido: Hometown: Ontario, California, U.S. Age: 31 years old. Died: November 9, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army National Guard, 1114th Transportation Company, Army National Guard, Bakersfield, Calif. Incident: Killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near his convoy vehicle in Baghdad.

As a veteran, I say that this war was wrong because you could not convince me why we were there in the first place. The President sent our troops away without proper training or equipment or proof of weapons of mass destruction.

The President believes that Iraq is making our country safer. This is not true. It has put more of us in greater risk. Our military is stretched too thin. We are at risk of not being prepared for any future emergency.

The Iraq war has cost billions of dollars, $650 billion, $10 billion a month. The money could be used to defend homeland security, for police officers, for highway patrol officers, for fire fighters, for sheriffs, for education, for health care and our seniors.

A change in course in Iraq is overdue. We must bring our troops home now. It's time for a new direction. We must support this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), whose son has served a tour of duty in Iraq.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Thank you, Congressman HUNTER. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of our troops. And I appreciate that your son, Duncan, Jr., has served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, just today we received President Bush's report to Congress on progress in Iraq. I find it sad for American families that on the same day the House is considering legislation that sets arbitrary deadlines and timelines for retreat, the provisions of H.R. 2956 mandate a hasty troop withdrawal starting within 120 days.

Additionally, the bill states that this withdrawal would be conducted in a safe and orderly way. Logistically, it would be impossible to remove our troops safely from Iraq in this short time line. Such rapid retreat would embolden the enemy, leaving American forces subject to ambushes, rockets and IED attacks.

As a 31-year veteran of the Army National Guard, and as a father of four sons in the military, my oldest an Iraq veteran, I especially understand the threats to our troops. In my seven visits to Iraq and three to Afghanistan, I've been continually inspired by the competence of our military leaders and the dedicated troops.

In today's edition of the Washington Post, the lead editorial makes the case against arbitrary withdrawal. It states, ''The generals who have devised a new strategy believe they are making faithful progress. Before Congress begins managing rotation schedules and ordering withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they ask for to see whether their strategy can offer some new hope.''

Additionally, al Qaeda has stated that Iraq is the central front in the global war on terrorism. And I believe to withdraw our troops before their mission is complete would invite future attacks at home. The Washington Post editorial states, ''Advocates of withdrawal would like to believe that Afghanistan is now a central front in the war on terror, but Iraq is not; believing that doesn't make sense.''

In conclusion, God bless our troops. We will never forget September the 11th.

I urge defeat of H.R. 2956.

□ 1630

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to my friend and colleague, a veteran of the war in Iraq and member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY).

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, for the sixth time, I rise calling for a change of direction in Iraq. For the sixth time, I call on the President to stop sending our brave men and women to referee a religious civil war. For the sixth time I call on this administration to focus our efforts in fighting the central front on the war on terror by killing Osama bin Laden and destroying al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, last week countless folks back in Pennsylvania stopped me and asked, Aren't you frustrated by this President who refuses to listen to Congress and the American people?

I told them, I am frustrated that our President refuses to follow the advice of military experts and the will of the American people. I am frustrated because my fellow paratroopers are still fighting and dying in the 138-degree heat of a Baghdad summer. I told them that I will refuse to stop fighting for the best policy for our troops and our families back here at home.

Mr. Speaker, leaving our troops in the middle of a religious civil war isn't resolute. It's reckless. No question that change is slow, but take heart, America. Change is coming. Congress is not going to stop.

President Bush, the legislative branch of government is back and we are not going to go away. We will change the course in Iraq and fight for a smarter global war on terror.

Some Republicans have questioned the patriotism of my fellow Democrats. Even former soldiers here in the House floor. But those types of Republicans are the exception and not the rule. In my short time in Congress, I have learned that most of my colleagues across the aisle are good, decent, and patriotic Americans. Mr. Speaker, I know how much pressure my friends across the aisle are under from the President, from their party leaders to just stay the course.

But I ask you as a soldier, as a father, and as a colleague to acknowledge what the status quo entails. That means additional warnings, walking to our desks here in the Halls of Congress, holding our breath and hoping we don't get word of another fallen soldier.

Mr. Speaker, I implore my Republican colleagues who know in their heart that we need a change. I implore you to think about how many more of these calls you have to make, how many more calls to wives, to fathers, to mothers we all will be forced to make if we don't take action.

I have heard the other side say 4 more months. This President has had his 4 months. He has had his 4 years and 4 months. In 2004, the President said we are turning the corner. In 2005, the Vice President said the insurgency was in its last throes. In 2006, that was the year in transition. And now in 2007, the President says just be patient.

In the last month alone in Bucks County, we have buried four of our finest sons. Four names have been added to the memorial board outside my office. I, for one, don't want to add any more names.

My Republican colleagues, you have the power today to stop these tragic phone calls, to stop adding faces and names to our memorials. Let's change the direction in Iraq and get back to fighting a smarter war on terror together, not as Democrats and Republicans, but as Americans.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their comments to the Chair, not to others in the second person.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to my colleague and friend, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of this legislation, H.R. 2956.

I have to remind my colleagues that I am from Florida and it does matter who is the President, and we should never forget the 2000 election because it matters who is the President of the United States.

President Bush intentionally misled the American people by supplying false grounds for going to war, and I personally never supported the war in Iraq.

This war has cost over a half trillion dollars. This war is now costing over $12 billion per month.

I stand with the American people and I wholeheartedly support our troops; yet I cannot support a truly senseless war that has killed 3,600 Americans and left over 26,000 severely wounded.

The soldiers did not vote for this war, but when given a mission, they do the best they can to complete it. The military is doing the job they were sent to do. There was a flaw in the mission from the beginning, and the flaw lies with us.

I want to be clear. The President's checking account has been overdrawn. The Bush administration's manipulation of taxpayer dollars to fund this war is over, and 70 percent of the American people oppose this war. This war needs to come to an immediate end.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the bill. Let's redeploy our men and women.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind all Members that remarks in debate may not engage in personalities toward the President or Vice President.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to our distinguished leader, the

gentleman from Maryland, my friend and colleague (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

We have no more serious matter to debate than war and peace. I thank the gentleman for his extraordinary leadership and for bringing this bill to the floor.

I must remark that how different I think the debate would be if not one of the facts were changed but one: that if it were Bill Clinton in the Presidency and all the other facts were the same, I ask my friends on the other side of the aisle what would their comments reflect.

I have said it before many times on this House floor and I will say it again today. Every Member of this great body who swears an oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, is committed to fighting and defeating terrorism. We must not lose sight in this debate that terrorism is a real threat to our people and to our country. We do not lose sight of that on this side of the aisle. We are committed to defeating terrorists and protecting America. Any suggestion otherwise demeans our discourse and is beneath, frankly, the dignity of the Members of this institution and the American people.

After nearly 4½ years in Iraq, a war that has been, I think, superbly peopled by our men and women in uniform but they have been trying to pursue an incompetently planned policy, this is what our Nation has to show for its efforts:

More than 3,600 brave American servicemen and women have been killed in action. More than 26,000 others have been maimed and injured. The American taxpayer has spent $450 billion on this war, with a pending request by the administration for an additional $147 billion.

And yet the President's policy in Iraq is not succeeding. Just today the administration released the ''assessment report'' on Iraq demanded by this Democratic Congress. The bottom line is the Iraq Government has failed to meet a single one of the security, political, and economic milestones for success. Perhaps most jarring, the administration rates as ''unsatisfactory'' the number of Iraqi security units capable of operating independently. That is over 50 months later.

The report states: ''There has been a slight reduction in units assessed as capable of independent operations since January, 2007.'' In other words, the administration says we are going backwards in terms of the capability of the Iraqi forces.

While the administration and congressional Republicans try to put a positive spin on the so-called ''progress'' in Iraq, other respected voices are not so optimistic. Yesterday, Thomas Fingar, the Deputy Director for Analysis at the National Intelligence Council, told the House Armed Services Committee that there have been ''few appreciable gains'' in Iraqi political progress. Even General David Petraeus, our top commander in Iraq, a gentleman that all of us respect as a military leader, told the New York Times that ''while some measures of violence showed a downward trend, it was too early to suggest that there has been a lasting turnaround in the war.'' That is over 50 months later.

Mr. Speaker, last January in an address to the Nation, President Bush stated: ''America will hold the Iraqi government to the benchmarks it has announced.'' We have not done so. We said we would do that, but we have not done so. Today the President shows no intention of changing course even as the Iraqis fail to meet those benchmarks.

Our fight against terrorism must and will be tough, but it also must be smart. And it is long past time that we recognize the following: The President's stay-the-course strategy is not working. The Iraqis must take responsibility for their own country. This war has severely diminished our military readiness and diverted our attention in the war on terror. If that were not the case, Osama bin Laden would still not be at large and al Qaeda would not be reported as being back at the strength that it had on September 11 of 2001.

After $450 billion and precious blood being spilled by American troops and others, we must change course by voting for this legislation, which calls for a responsible redeployment of American forces in Iraq and a comprehensive plan in U.S. policy in Iraq and the broader region.

Mr. Speaker, we must have a specific strategy for missions our remaining forces would undertake as well as plans to engage Iraq's neighboring states and to locate and eliminate al Qaeda and allied terrorist networks, which seek to destabilize and destroy the United States and other democracies. Jonathan Alter at Newsweek just a week ago referred to this as a ''pull and strike'' strategy. Redeploy so that our forces are able to focus on the terrorists, not on the civil war in which they find themselves embroiled.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and an increasing number of our friends on the other side of the aisle have lost confidence in the President's Iraq strategy because we have yet to see demonstrable, sustainable progress in that effort. Our troops have done everything we have asked them.

I'll tell you that we are so proud of those of you who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States. I was so proud of PATRICK MURPHY's statement that he gave here today, so proud of all of those who have served not only in Iraq but in every theater of conflict to which Americans have responded.

But as Senator DOMENICI told the Baltimore Sun yesterday, one of the senior Members of the United States Senate and a leader in the Republican Party, he said this: ''There is no reason to wait . . . I am trying to tell the President that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.''

□ 1645

That is not a Democratic Member of the Senate speaking, that is a senior Republican leader saying there is no reason to wait.

This bill is on this floor this day because there is no reason to wait. Hopefully this body will overwhelmingly respond to the will and focus of the American people, which are pleading for a change in strategy, a new direction, a policy of success against terrorists, and ensuring the safety of our Nation and its people. Let's change our strategy and demand that the Iraqis step up and be responsible for their country.

Our presence there, General Casey observed, has been undermining their taking responsibility, not enhancing it. Let's be responsibly redeploying our troops. And let's focus our resources and efforts on disrupting and destroying the terrorist networks that threaten our national security. This legislation allows us to accomplish that mission.

I urge my colleagues, for this body, for their constituents, for this country, and for our troops, pass this legislation.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD).

Mr. WHITFIELD. You know, every Member of this House has great respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee from Missouri and the ranking member from California. And like the American people, most Members of this House are torn in different directions on this issue of our involvement in Iraq and what steps we should take. But this resolution says as a requirement that the Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq no later than 120 days after the enactment of this act.

General Petraeus was confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate, and in the supplemental, there was a requirement that, on September 15, General Petraeus would make a report to the Congress on the conditions in Iraq. And I believe that it is premature to come forth with this resolution today. But if it comes back at the end of September, after General Petraeus has made his report, the commanding general in Iraq with the responsibility, I think that all of us have the responsibility to read his report, to make an assessment which would be best for the American people.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I have, and I offer as part of the RECORD, Mr. Speaker, a letter I just received dated July 12 from Lee H. Hamilton from the Woodrow Wilson International Center of Scholars, who is the national president thereof. And I will

read just part of it and not take any more time. But it says, ''Dear Ike, thank you for sharing H.R. 2956 on responsible redeployment from Iraq. The legislation outlines the right change in mission for U.S. forces in Iraq, and redeployment within a responsible time frame. It effectively outlines the functions of the residual force that would remain in Iraq after redeployment, and makes an important contribution by focusing on the need for an accounting of U.S. interests in both Iraq and the wider region.''

I offer this letter at this time.

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Congressman IKE SKELTON,
Committee on Armed Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR IKE: Thank you for sharing HR 2956 on responsible redeployment from Iraq. The legislation outlines the right change in mission for U.S. forces in Iraq, and redeployment within a responsible timeframe. It effectively outlines the functions of the residual force that would remain in Iraq after redeployment, and makes an important contribution by focusing on the need for an accounting of U.S. interests in both Iraq and the wider region.

Beyond what is outlined in the bill, much needs to be done in Iraq. The training of Iraqi Security Forces must be intensified. An aggressive diplomatic offensive is urgently needed to press for national reconciliation in Iraq, and to advance stability in the region. And some measure of consensus needs to be reached in the country—and between the President and Congress—so that we can move forward with unity of effort.

The American people want a responsible transition for U.S. forces out of Iraq. This resolution provides that transition. It is not perfect, but it moves our national debate forward.

With best wishes,
Sincerely,

LEE H. HAMILTON.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from South Carolina who is our distinguished majority whip, Mr. CLYBURN.

Mr. CLYBURN. Let me thank our chairman for yielding me this time.

To date, we have spent almost half a trillion dollars on the Iraq war. Over 3,600 American lives have been lost, and more than 26,000 Americans have been wounded. When the President announced his escalation plan 6 months ago, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said it would only last a few months. Majority Leader BOEHNER said we would know whether or not the escalation succeeded or failed within 90 days. And Secretary Rice said we would not stay married to a plan that is not working.

Since the President announced this surge, we have lost nearly 600 American troops and spent more than $60 billion. In fact, the monthly cost in lives and resources has increased dramatically since the war began.

Today, the American people received an interim report from the President on his escalation plan. This was the verdict: None of the 18 benchmarks he outlined in January have been reached. In fact, it clearly illustrated how far the Iraqi Government is from political progress and national reconciliation.

A recently released national intelligence report concludes that al Qaeda has reconstituted its core network and may be a stronger terrorist organization than it was a year ago. In fact, it could be closer to pre-9/11 strength and reach.

Republicans have spoken out against this war, failed policies in Iraq yet, out of fear of being called names, are reluctant to vote against this resolution.

What have we come to when if people express their consciences, they are called names? It's beneath the dignity of the sacrifices of our men and women, and I ask my colleagues to vote for this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, it's been asked that we consider this debate in such a way that our sons and daughters are involved, and that's why the gentleman who just spoke, Mr. WILSON's son has done a tour in Iraq. The gentleman I am going to announce now, Mr. KLINE, has a son who has done a tour as a helicopter pilot in Iraq.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the proponents of this bill are fond of citing historical examples as they declare the futility of combat operations in Iraq. The CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is full of stories describing the failed British invasion of Gallipoli or the far more popular comparisons to the American experience in Vietnam.

Another more prescient historical comparison, however, was made by the British author George Orwell. Contemplating the defeatist rhetoric of the English intelligentsia during the German offensive against Britain in World War II, he remarked, ''The quickest way of ending a war is to lose it. And if one finds the prospect of a long war intolerable, it is natural to disbelieve in the possibility of victory.'' Those in favor of the bill presented on the floor today, Mr. Speaker, do not believe in the possibility of victory, despite the protests of the soldiers and Marines returning from the battlefield saying otherwise.

By advocating a rapid withdrawal, they endorse the quickest way of ending the war, by losing it. It has been less than a month since the full force of troops requested by military commanders arrived in Iraq, but already some have declared the operation to be a failure. General Petraeus arrived in Baghdad in February with a new strategy designed to reinforce the Iraqi security forces confronting al Qaeda, terrorists and Iranian-supplied insurgents. Rather than giving him the opportunity to fully implement his surge strategy, opponents in Congress immediately sought to undermine his credibility and his ability to command.

Mr. Speaker, our troops serving in Iraq don't need 435 armchair generals dictating the tactical movements of troops, as this legislation would surely do. They have true commanders whose professional military skills have been honed by decades of military service. They need us to renew our commitment to them and their commanders. And more importantly, they need us to trust their commanders' decisions.

General Petraeus said in a letter to his troops, ''Success will require discipline, fortitude and initiative, qualities that you have in abundance.'' The question before us today, Mr. Speaker, is, do we have those qualities?

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. I rise in opposition to the bill.

We've lost over 3,600 of our brave service men and women; 1 million innocent Iraqis have perished in the war. We're now telling Iraqis, whose country the U.S. destroyed, whose reconstruction funds the U.S. mishandled, whose social networks have been shredded, stand on your own feet, while we try to steal their oil under the cover of occupation.

This bill will not end the war. This bill will not end the occupation. It doesn't take a vote to end this war. We must inform the administration that the $97 billion appropriated last month is the end of the financing for the war. Use the money that is in the pipeline through October 1st to bring the troops home. Compel the President to put together an international peacekeeping security force which would move in as our troops leave.

We could have our troops home by October 1. The question is whether we're ready to take a stand to do that, or whether or not we're going to vote on resolutions that give the American people the appearance that we want to end the war, without actually addressing the central issue that will end the war: Stop the funding.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow our other two speakers who have sons who have served in Iraq with another gentleman, Mr. AKIN, the gentleman from Missouri, whose son Perry has served a tour in Iraq in the United States Marine Corps.

I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman.

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the reason that Americans send us here to Congress is to have us to solve problems. And I don't think any of us mind, and I certainly don't mind, the accusation by Democrats to say that the war and the situation in Iraq is incompetently planned, or that we should change course, or that we should have bold, new initiatives. In fact, I think that's what we should be discussing. But unfortunately, what we have here today is not a matter of solving problems but rather of playing politics. Because the bill in front of us is not a bold plan. It doesn't have any segment of a plan at all. It just simply says, we're going to pull a bunch of troops out at a particular time. It

doesn't say how many; it just says we are going to pull some troops out. You know, the people who fought World War II would have liked very much to have ended the war more rapidly if they could just put something on a wish list and say, we're going to bring some troops home. But you can't do that until you win a war. And what we have before us is not a bold plan, and it's not a constructive suggestion to say, hey, you've incompetently managed the war, so here's a better way. There's no better way. It offers nothing other than just a bunch of wishes.

Now, if we want to send this to whoever it is that wants to grant wishes, that might be useful, but it's absolutely useless in terms of solving problems. And that's why we should be here.

I have to take the Democrats to task. You forgot, you guys are in the majority. The people elected you to solve problems. This doesn't solve a problem, it just simply says we want to bring some troops home. It doesn't say how or what we're going to do or what the strategy is. It says, oh, we've already done this one thing for a month, and now we just want to turn around and bring the troops home.

I think one thing that we can understand and one thing that we need to do is to stand away from this problem a little bit and put it in the broadest terms, and that is the terms as Americans.

There is one thing that has joined us together that we just celebrated, and that's the Fourth of July. And the Fourth of July we signed a Declaration of Independence, and the heart of that document, the heart of what America believes in is the fact that it says we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; among these is life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And we stand tall on the Fourth of July when we remember that set of principles.

So the job of government is to protect those rights. And who is it that our sons and daughters are now fighting? They're people who believe that we blow up innocent people to make a political statement. They're people who believe that we use terror to compel people so that they don't have freedom and that people cannot pursue happiness and women cannot be educated. And so, is it so odd that we find ourselves fighting against people who believe the diametric opposite of everything America has ever stood for?

I taught those principles to my little kids when they were children. And they started the ''Marine Club.'' Here is a picture of them at a flag ceremony in their rag-tag uniforms bought from their Army surplus store, a bunch of little kids. Now what has happened is they have implemented those ideas. Well, what has happened is this little kid here is now Special Forces Air Force Academy, just graduated last month. And this other one, my son, has graduated from the little Marine club to the big Marine club. Here is a cache of weapons found in Fallujah. There is my son. And the reason that they are there and the reason that he risked his life numerous times is because he does believe there is a God that gives rights to all people, and that governments should protect life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And when we, as Americans, forget that, then we start to lose our sense of direction in what we're doing.

Until there is a specific proposal, then there is nothing being offered at all. There is not leadership. And this is merely politics.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my colleague, my friend, the gentlelady from Ohio (Mrs. JONES).

□ 1700

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, there is a statement that says: ''To believe that God will do everything while you do nothing is not faith but superstition.'' We have an opportunity to do something, not to wait for God to do it.

But let me start where I was. On May 21, I buried my dad, a veteran of the Korean War. He died at age 87. As I stood before that flag-draped coffin, I thought about all the mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, children, nieces and nephews who have buried their loved ones as a result of this Iraqi war—3,600. I don't want to go to another funeral, I have been to five. Not another deployment, I have been to three. Not another memorial, I have been to six.

I want our soldiers to come home as soon as possible. We have an opportunity to do a deployment that makes sense, that fits within all that we can do as Members of Congress. Members of Congress, step up to the plate. Don't be afraid. Vote in favor of this redeployment.

Mr. HUNTER. How much time do we have left, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 5½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Missouri has 9½ minutes remaining.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield myself 4½ minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote against this bill. I have great respect for my friend, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. We work on many bills together, many pieces of legislation, and 99 percent of the time we find common cause in supporting the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

This bill is not one of them. I think that this bill, Mr. Speaker, is a call to retreat by the Democratic leadership of the House, which can only hurt this country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have been here before. I have listened to my colleagues on the Democrat side declare that the operation that we were undertaking in El Salvador to provide a little shield around that fragile government back in the 1980s was going to be ''America's next Vietnam.'' Yet we persevered. We kept that shield in place. We stood up a democratic government. Today, the free government of El Salvador supplies troops who stand side by side with Americans in Iraq.

I was here when Ronald Reagan stood up against the Soviet Union when they were putting SS–20 missiles around our allies, Germany and France, in Europe. Many people on the other side of the aisle said he was going in the wrong direction. He was going to start World War III. We were going to have a nuclear war because of the fact that the President was standing up to the Soviet Union. Yes, he did that, moving Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles to offset the Soviet missiles. At one point, they picked up the telephone and said, Can we talk? Ultimately we brought down the Berlin Wall. We freed, with American perseverance, hundreds of millions of people.

Now, we all agree that if Iraq works, it is to the benefit of the United States. When I say that ''if Iraq works,'' I mean if we have a nation which has a modicum of freedom for its people, a nation which will not be a state sponsor of terrorism, a nation which will be a friend to the United States, then we win. That is in our interest. That is what we are trying to build in Iraq.

We all agree that it is rough and tough and difficult. Mr. Speaker, it is dangerous. We all know that. That is why I had the last three speakers being fathers of Americans who have served in Iraq in the Marine Corps and in the United States Army. So we know it is difficult.

But, you know, every time I hear good news coming out, every time I hear that, I saw the message from one of our senior Marine commanders who said, We are crushing al Qaeda in Anbar province, then I pick up a statement by one of the Democrat leaders saying, We have lost. We have lost the war. I put this piece of legislation in that same category.

Twenty-seven days, less than 4 weeks after we put the surge in full force, we are already being called to leave. Now, we were just criticized, the President was criticized, for saying, This is the starting line. Well, I think we should criticize the Democrats for saying, This is the finish line. I have heard so many Democrat leaders say, We are going to stop the war. That has been said over and over.

Mr. Speaker, there is no Democrat leader here or anywhere who can stop the war. The only thing we can do is leave this battlefield. We can't stop this war any more than the people of Great Britain stopped the war when they just had this incident last week in Scotland. We can't stop this war any more than the victims in the Kobar Towers stopped the war. We can't stop this war any more than the marines in

the Beirut barrack had the power to stop the war. We can't stop this war any more than the sailors of the USS *Cole* had any ability to stop the war. This war has been forced on us. The only way we should end it, the only way we can end it, is to win.

Now we have the surge going on. It has been going on for 27 days. The leader in whom we all vest great confidence, General Petraeus, is to speak to us about the policies, about the tactics, about the strategies, and he will suggest adjustments on September 15. The idea that only 4 weeks after we have fully funded and we have fully deployed this surge we are somehow going to sound the retreat is a real disservice to this mission.

Mr. Speaker, what I would ask of all of our Members, Democrat and Republican, is vote against this call to retreat. If we stop fighting the terrorists, we will start losing this war against the terrorists.

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

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), my friend, my colleague, the Honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding, and I want to express the appreciation of so many in this Congress and this country to him for his tremendous leadership. For 30 years, he has been a great champion for our men and women in uniform; for the quality of their lives and their families as they serve our country; for their readiness as they prepare to go to war; for their well-being as they fight for our country; for his appreciation of the sacrifice that they and their families are willing to make.

Thank you, Mr. SKELTON, for being such a great leader, and thank you for giving us this opportunity today to speak on behalf of the American people, to take a step to end the war in Iraq and to have a vision of a strategic plan for stability in the Middle East.

Your bill is excellent and your timing, Mr. SKELTON, is perfect, because today the Bush administration released a progress report on the Iraq benchmarks required by the supplemental appropriations bill passed in May. The report makes clear that not even the White House can conclude that there has been significant progress on the Warner resolution benchmarks.

This is hardly surprising, given what is publicly available each day in the media: truck bombs killing scores of people in the markets; the supposedly secure Green Zone is rocked by a 30-inute mortar and rocket barrage; despite 30,000 additional American troops to increase security, Iraqi leaders are urging their people to arm themselves for their own protection; legislation to make the Iraqi political process more inclusive is stalled in the Iraqi legislature; and the cost of the war in precious lives and wounded American heroes continues to rise. Since the surge began, we have lost nearly 600 American troops.

The benchmarks that are being reported on today were endorsed by President Bush and the Government of Iraq to measure political reconciliation and the promotion of security in Iraq. In the 5th year of the war, the President's strategy has failed to meet those key benchmarks.

President Bush continues to urge patience, but what is needed and what the American people are demanding is a new direction. Remaining bogged down in a sectarian civil war in Iraq continues an unacceptable strain on our military and serves as an effective recruiting tool for al Qaeda. Reports about the resilience of al Qaeda in Iraq are alarming, but assessments that the global al Qaeda network is reconstituting its capabilities describes a far greater threat.

The war is not making our military stronger to protect our interests, the American people safer or the Middle East more secure. It prevents a refocusing of our efforts on the real war on terrorism in places like Afghanistan, and it hinders the development of a new direction strategy for greater stability in the Middle East.

As General Batiste has said, ''Iraq is distracting America from what should be the focus of main effort. It is in America's best interests to rethink our national strategy, deliberately disengage from Iraq, refit and rearm our military, get serious about homeland security, and prepare to win the next phase of the struggle against worldwide Islamic extremism.''

The American people see the danger of clinging to an untenable situation in Iraq. That is why by large margins they favor a redeployment of our troops. Passage of Chairman SKELTON's bipartisan bill will reflect the will of the American people and reaffirm the judgment of the House that the redeployment of our troops is a central element and an effective way forward in Iraq.

We will repeat that judgment legislatively as often as necessary, hopefully with an increasing level of support from our Republican colleagues, until pressure from the American people causes the President to change his mind and his policies.

To those who urge that we wait until September, I say that it has been 4½ years and half a trillion dollars, at least. We have already waited too long. The troops in their third and fourth tours in Iraq, those who have been so grievously wounded and the families of those who have died, deserve far better than that.

After more than 3,600 lives have been lost to a flawed strategy, we have a responsibility to create a new direction. After spending $329 million every day, $329 million every day on the war in Iraq, on a war that is not making our country safer, we have an obligation to change course. After 5 years of a failed policy in Iraq, we have a duty, not just to voice our opposition, but to vote to end the war.

Chairman SKELTON's bipartisan bill offers a step we can take today toward bringing the troops home, to creating a strategic vision for stability in the Middle East and for beginning to rearm our military.

Let us pass this bill and those that will follow in the coming weeks and provide the new direction on Iraq that the American people demand and that is so urgently needed. I urge a ''yes'' vote on the Skelton bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to our final speaker, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the Republican leader.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague from California for yielding and thank all of the Members for what has really been a very serious debate about our efforts in Iraq.

When we think about what we went through this past spring, the fight over funding our troops that went on for about 112 days here in the House, I had thought that we had come to some resolution. Forty-eight days ago we sent to the President of the United States a bill passed by this House, passed by the Senate and signed into law that would fund our troops through the end of September.

□ 1715

That same bill, we asked General Petraeus to report back to the Congress on July 15 his interim report and asked him to give a more complete report by September 15 of this year. And here we are some 48 days later saying, we give up.

One can only imagine why this bill is on the floor today. If Members were serious about this bill, we would have seen it come through committee, come through the Rules Committee. No, no, this bill showed up Tuesday night about 9 o'clock out of thin air that we were going to have this debate this week. One can only look at what is happening on the floor of the House and describe it as a partisan political stunt, because that is exactly what it is.

This House voted to support our troops, to fund our troops, and to fund our effort in Afghanistan and in Iraq. And here we are, once again, back here posing for holy pictures, as our good friend from Wisconsin would say.

This bill that we have before us makes our troops pawns in a partisan political battle. I don't think that is what anyone wants. I think this bill on the floor today undermines General Petraeus and undermines the mission that he has to help make Iraq and America safe.

So what we have here is not leadership; it is negligence. My colleague, the majority leader, my friend from Maryland, and the Speaker of the House both say we want to fight the terrorists; we want to fight them where they are. Well, who is our biggest enemy in

Iraq today? Who is the biggest fight that we have in Iraq today? It is al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is losing, and that is why we see the bigger bombs going off and the bigger demonstrations and the bigger casualties, because they are losing and trying to influence public opinion here in the United States.

But what surprises me about what we are doing here today is the willful ignoring of the consequences of failure in Iraq. If we fail in Iraq, we know what happens, we make America less safe. We know that we will provide a safe haven for al Qaeda to operate around the world out of their new safe haven that they will have in Iraq. We will destabilize the Middle East, we will endanger Israel. We will embolden the Iranians even more than they have already been emboldened, and we will allow al Qaeda to be stronger and to be able to recruit more people to kill Americans and our allies around the world. These are serious consequences for the American people and our allies around the world, and we can't shrink from our responsibility here.

General Petraeus is making progress. Not as much progress as we would all like for him to make, but he is making progress on the ground, as he reported in the report that came out today. The Iraqi government has made some progress. Not nearly enough, but to just pull the rug out from under General Petraeus, to pull the rug out from under our troops that are in Iraq fighting for our freedom and fighting for the freedom of the Iraqi people at this moment is absolutely the most negligent action that I have seen this House take yet on this issue.

Why can't we sit back and allow General Petraeus's plan to have a chance to succeed? Why can't we wait until September 15, as we had all agreed, for his final report to come forward and to assess the progress that is being made and what, if any, new direction ought to be taken?

I believe, and I think the American people believe, that we ought to allow the generals on the ground in Iraq to make those suggestions to us and not sit back and let politicians here in Washington make decisions about our future and about our safety.

But while we are sitting here debating this meaningless bill that we have before us, we could be acting on serious legislation to help make America safer. There is a giant loophole in the terrorist surveillance program that means that activity between terrorists overseas cannot be acted upon and cannot be listened to by this government. There is information that would help make America safe, that would bring more terrorists to justice; information that is being left on the table because of partisan political games in this House. Why don't we bring the FISA modernization bill to this floor? Why don't we give the NSA the terrorist surveillance program and other agencies the ability to track these terrorist activities and these terrorist phone calls and information movement that we know today that we can't touch and we can't use?

We all know through reports over the last couple of days that al Qaeda has increased in its strength. We also know from news reports over the last couple of days that there has been increasing chatter among terrorists around the world. And yet here we are debating a meaningless bill that undermines our troops, ignoring the fact that there is information that could help keep America safer that we can't touch because this House will not act. I think that is negligent, and I think it is irresponsible.

I would urge my colleagues to let's let General Petraeus and the troops have a chance to succeed. Let's help them in their mission to help make Iraq safer and to make America safer, and the way we do that is to take this bill that we have before us and defeat it.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I just heard the minority leader say that we are willfully ignoring the consequences of Iraq. That is what I'm talking about, the willful consequences of Iraq when I spoke a few moments ago about the stretch and the strain and the difficulty of gluing our Army and Marines back together again.

This is serious business. We have a readiness crisis due to our extended operations in Iraq. Readiness in the Army's combat units has fallen to a dangerous level. Half of the Army's active brigades are in combat, and the remaining units are preparing for deployment. Units preparing for combat do not have all of their assigned personnel or equipment when preparing for combat. Combat units are experiencing equipment shortfalls; and let me mention that we have lost over 2,000 trucks and Humvees, over 100 tanks and armored vehicles, and over 100 aircraft. Combat units' readiness is being sustained at the expense of nondeployed units through the use of emergency war stocks.

I am worried. My heart breaks because no one seems to be listening on the other side, and no one who is opposed to this legislation mentioned in this debate anything about the stretch and the strain on our ground forces of the United States. That concerns me. That is the willful ignoring of consequences of Iraq. Something must be done.

Lee Hamilton, the co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, spoke in a letter to me, which I read a few moments ago, endorsing this legislation as a responsible bill: We must do something, and it must be done today. This is serious business.

Let me salute the eloquence of my friend from California, Mr. HUNTER. He asked us to wait until September. We have had four Septembers already in Iraq. And you know what? It reminds me, and maybe some of those who have a little gray in their hair, Mr. Speaker, will recall a song that was popular decades ago, and that line in that song, the September song, that says, we haven't got time for the waiting game. We don't have time for the waiting game.

This is the right time, the right measure, the right issue. It is right for our ground forces. It is right for those in uniform. It is right for their families. It is right for our country. We have been engaged in Iraq since March of 2003. We have threats yet unforeseen.

If we continue to strain our ground forces as they are, we will not be ready for them. Hopefully they never come, but as sure as God made little green apples, those threats will be there. That's the purpose of this. The readiness of our forces and the capability of what they need to do for us in the days ahead, that is our job under the Constitution, to raise and maintain. That's what we are doing.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I say that we need to pass this legislation. We need to do so to pass the responsibility back to the Iraqis, to keep our forces in a higher state of readiness, and to make sure that the future is all the more safer for those of us here in our country.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this renewed debate on the war in Iraq. Iraq is today's signature issue, and it is 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 will best protect our national interests and those of our allies and supports those servicemembers and civiians—and their families—who so bravely serve our country today in Iraq and elsewhere around the world.

If enacted, H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, the legislation before us today, would significantly change the direction of current operations in Iraq. Notably, this legislation would require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces personnel deployed in Iraq—beginning as early as 120 days after enactment of this bill—to a more limited presence by April 1, 2008. Also notable, this legislation would require the President to submit to Congress a new comprehensive strategy that would guide future operations in Iraq and that would include specific plans for diplomatic initiatives to engage United States allies and others in the region to bring stability to Iraq.

This strategy, according to H.R. 2956, would be written to reflect an honest assessment of the United States' national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region. The document would be written to include the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq. This bill takes into account the importance of protecting United States diplomatic personnel and

combating terrorism in Iraq in any redeployment strategy. The strategy would also include a justification of the minimum force levels required to protect United States national security interests in Iraq after April 1, 2008, based upon a description of the specific missions of the Armed Forces to be undertaken. Of those missions, the strategy would require an assessment of the extent to which military personnel would fulfill roles traditionally performed by diplomatic personnel.

H.R. 2956 will generate Significant debate. Withdrawal timelines and a date have been discussed during recent debate on this issue. Consensus on this aspect of this bill will remain hard to reach. But this bill helps advances our national discussion with respect to the war in Iraq by calling for a new comprehensive strategy. Such a comprehensive strategy is long overdue.

I introduced H.R. 744, the Iraq Policy Revitalization and Congressional Oversight Enhancement Act on January 31, 2007. H.R. 744 would help enhance congressional oversight of Operation Iraqi Freedom by requiring the President to transmit periodically to Congress a consolidated, comprehensive report that would detail the terms of completion for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The bill would also require the President to seek to enter into a multilateral agreement—based on that plan—to help provide for the completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am encouraged that the legislation before us today would require a similar plan be drafted by the President and communicated to Congress. Our soldiers and diplomats need a comprehensive, actionable plan that defines what it is that they need to accomplish in order to successfully complete their missions.

It is true the Government of Iraq must increasingly shoulder the burden of, and better fulfill its obligation to, govern from moderate positions, with uniformity, and with regard to the rule of law. But recent history tells us that we cannot rely on the Government of Iraq to govern in that manner. As H.R. 744 notes, the inability or unwillingness of the Government of Iraq to govern in moderate terms contributes to violence against United States servicemembers and Coalition forces, creates barriers to national reconciliation in Iraq, and impedes the expeditious completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the return of our servicemembers to their peacetime duty stations. The outcome of policies that are overly dependent upon a reportedly broken, corrupt, and sectarian government delivering on complicated policies, against great odds, and during a compressed period of time is uncertain. This fact underscores the importance of and the need for a new comprehensive strategy.

I believe that continued, 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 we will have to defend to history. The United States assumed a moral obligation to bring a minimum of order to Iraq when we, in a preemptive manner, attacked that county four years ago. History will judge us harshly if we act to abandon this obligation. The consideration of H.R. 2956 allows us an opportunity to formulate a national strategy that more effectively addresses the realities of Iraq.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.''

This legislation would accomplish what the majority of the American people have said over and over that they support—the redeployment of American troops from Iraq. H.R. 2956 would require this redeployment to begin within 120 days, with completion to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

The evidence continues to mount that the surge is not working. More than 3,500 troops have lost their lives and more than 26,000 have been wounded since this war began. The costs are too great to continue this failed policy.

The progress report that was presented to Congress today states that the Iraqi government has made limited progress in meeting political, economic, or security benchmarks and in some instances has made virtually no progress at all. The President said that when the Iraqis stand up, our troops will stand down. More than four years later, we are still waiting.

Increasingly, Republican senators are coming forward to announce that they support a change in policy in Iraq. I am glad that they are finally accepting what many of us have been saying for months. Yet the President continues to dig in by promoting his failed policy against the will of the American people and despite dwindling support within his own party.

This bill establishes a new direction for our forces in Iraq. I urge my colleagues to listen to their constituents and support this legislation.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation calling for the safe and responsible redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. Make no mistake about it: The administration's incompetence in planning and executing the post-war occupation has brought us to this point. It is now Congress's responsibility to stand up for the majority of American voices who seek an end to this war. This bill provides for a redeployment of our troops not only so that they will be safe, but also so they will be focused on securing our Nation, not caught in the crossfire of a sectarian civil war in Iraq. We must provide for our men and women in uniform and their families.

Some assert with no basis that the war in Iraq has made us safer when, in fact, the opposite is true. I am deeply troubled by today's report from the National Counterterrorism Center which states that al-Qaeda is stronger now than at any point since 9/11. Terrorist cells capitalized on our preoccupations in Iraq to reestablish a presence in the Middle East and beyond. For years, the Administration has stubbornly insisted that Iraq is the central front of the War on Terrorism, but today's report clearly indicates just how damaging this war has been to our national security.

The President's progress report on Iraq issued today shows unsatisfactory improvement of security benchmarks. The report predicts a rise in insurgent violence in the coming months and an increased effort to disrupt life for Iraqis. In addition, there appears to be no improvement in eliminating the sectarian influences that have infiltrated Iraqi security forces. This is not acceptable. The administration has not delivered on its promises in Iraq and now we must move forward to establish a new direction. It simply is not fair to ask our soldiers and marines to continue to police someone else's civil war. It is especially irresponsible when considering the mountains of evidence from our own intelligence agencies pronouncing that this conflict cannot be solved by our military might alone. We must refocus our attention on the true threats to our Nation and our citizens.

Americans owe a debt of gratitude to our troops and their families for the sacrifices they have made during this difficult time. Servicemembers have had to endure difficult assignments and failed civilian leadership; but they have done so with honor and dignity. We must not forget the families who had to go without their loved ones for months at a time; the missed birthdays, baseball games, long nights away.

Mr. Speaker, the time for talking has ended; we must act, without delay, to redeploy our brave troops out of Iraq.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this legislation.

The American people are not happy with the conflict in Iraq; I am not pleased either. Every day, my constituents tell me their concerns with Iraq, and I can understand their desire to put this behind us.

The reality is, however, that we cannot snap our fingers and make things all better; it's not simply going to go away.

My friends on the other side of the aisle have argued for years that we rushed headlong into Iraq without seriously considering the long-term consequences. Yet with this legislation they are repeating the very same mistake, only in reverse.

Staying the course is not a viable option, but neither is the fallacy of the orderly, phased withdrawal proposed by this legislation. You cannot gradually blow up a dam; once we begin to leave, chaos will immediately ensue. So I ask my colleagues, what do you propose to do after you order our troops away? What's your plan? Where's your responsible and workable strategy and vision?

Unfortunately, such a scenario may prove inevitable. But my colleagues hold forth this legislation as a plan: it's not. It's political pabulum. It might give politicians cover, but it exposes our servicemen to danger even greater than they already face. Ethnic, tribal, and religious killings will increase by an order of magnitude. The current refugee situation, already a disaster for Iraq's neighbors, will be dwarfed by the exodus to come. Our own men and women in uniform will be standing in front of a tsunami of violence.

What is required is a thoughtful, deliberative plan to make the best of an undeniably bad situation. Such a plan is embodied in the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group—the product of a concerted, bipartisan and sincere effort on the part of some of our brightest citizens.

I have long advocated we seriously follow—or at least debate—the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. Foreign policy and diplomatic issues are usually complicated, nuanced and multi-leveled; the situation in Iraq is no different. Yet all we have been given to consider are all-or-nothing propositions.

I would welcome a bona fide discussion regarding how to move forward in Iraq and in the Middle East generally—that is what we owe the American people. What we have today is nothing but four hours cooing to the other side's base. This is not leadership. No amendments were made in order. There was no reaching out to Republicans like myself who felt the surge was a mistake and are looking for another direction. What we have is a framed ''take it or leave it,'' ''my way or the highway'' approach. That approach got us where we are—a healthy dialogue with options is needed to appropriately disengage.

Two months remain until General Petraeus will be summoned before Congress. He will give us—as we have charged him to do—an honest assessment on where this ''surge'' has lead our troops and the Iraqi people. I hope at that time, whether his testimony reveals success or failure, this body will have the wherewithal to have a serious, open debate on what options we have left.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the legislation before us today mandating a hard deadline for the Secretary of Defense to significantly reduce our troop presence in Iraq.

Over the last several months, similar attempts on the part of the Democratic leadership to require an arbitrary date for troop withdrawal have gone nowhere, wasting precious time debating legislation that would be vetoed by the President. While I believe strongly that we must change course in Iraq and bring our men and women home, it would be a mistake for Congress to think it could disregard the complexity of this conflict by simply picking a random date for withdrawal. Forcing such an important decision without considering the advice of military and foreign policy leaders, could lead to the loss of many more lives and open the door for sectarian chaos to spread across the entire Middle East.

For this reason, I have been a leading supporter of the Iraq Study Group, also known as the Baker-Hamilton Commission, which in December 2006 outlined a comprehensive approach for bringing a responsible conclusion to the conflict in Iraq. In fact, in early 2007, I went to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and called on the Bush Administration to change course in Iraq and implement the Study Group's recommendations for a new, robust diplomatic offensive in the Middle East. Since then, Secretary of State Rice has taken several encouraging steps to open the lines of communication with key nations like Iran and Syria, and I am hopeful that my efforts, and those of my colleagues, have prompted the White House to improve its diplomatic efforts in the region.

This September, Gen. David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker will submit a very important report regarding the conflict in Iraq. While I am hopeful that this report will show progress, I also feel strongly that we must begin developing a responsible postsurge strategy. Therefore, on June 5, 2007, I joined over forty other Members of Congress—Republicans and Democrats—in introducing the Iraq Study Group Recommendations Implementation Act. The Study Group recommendations, which would bolster diplomacy, improve political and economic reconstruction, and handoff the combat mission to the Iraqis, represent the first truly bipartisan proposal for ending this conflict and bringing Americans home.

Clearly, there is no easy solution in Iraq. Still, it is extremely discouraging that the Democratic leadership continues to hold votes on ''symbolic'' withdrawal timelines, while refusing to consider the bipartisan Iraq Study Group proposal—legislation that as of today has been cosponsored by 25 Democrats and 33 Republicans in the House.

Mr. Speaker, the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission serves as a model for how we must work together in a responsible fashion to stabilize Iraq and get our brave soldiers off the streets. Rather than wasting time debating arbitrary timelines that disregard the complexity of the situation, it is critical that we come together now in support of a responsible exit strategy. I am encouraged that thirteen additional Members of Congress have signed-on to the Iraq Study Group Implementation Act since we introduced it over a month ago and I am hopeful that Members from across the political spectrum will join me in uniting behind this crucial effort.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2956 which, while a well-intended attempt to reduce our nation's seemingly unlimited military commitment in Iraq, is in so many respects deeply flawed.

I have been one of the strongest opponents of military action against Iraq. I voted against the initial authorization in 2002 and I have voted against every supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war. I even voted against the initial ''Iraq regime change'' legislation back in 1998. I believe our troops should be brought back to the United States without delay. Unfortunately, one of the reasons I oppose this legislation is that it masquerades as a troop withdrawal measure but in reality may well end up increasing U.S. commitments in the Middle East

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the debate we should have had four years ago, before Congress voted to abrogate its Constitutional obligation to declare war and transfer that authority to the president. Some in this body were rather glib in declaring the constitution antiquated while voting to cede the ability to initiate hostilities to the President. Now we see the result of ignoring the Constitution, and we are bringing even more mayhem to the process with this legislation.

To those who believe this act would somehow end the war, I simply point to the title for Section 3 of the bill, which states, ''Requirement to reduce the number of armed forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq.'' However the number of troops are limited, this legislation nevertheless will permit an ongoing American military presence in Iraq with our soldiers continuing to be engaged in hostilities.

I also wish to draw attention to Section 4(b)(1), which mandates the President to submit a ''Strategy for Iraq'' by the beginning of next year. This ''strategy'' is to include:

> A discussion of United States national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region and the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

In other words, far from extricating ourselves from the debacle in Iraq, this bill would set in motion a policy that could lead to a wider regional commitment, both financially and militarily. Such a policy would be disastrous for both our overextended national security forces and beleaguered taxpayers. This could, in fact, amount to an authorization for a region-wide ''surge.''

Congress' job is to change the policy on Iraq, not to tell the military leaders how many troops they should have. I have attempted to do this with H.R. 2605, a bill to sunset after a six month period the authorization for military activity in Iraq. During this period a new plan for Iraq could be discussed and agreed. Plan first, authorization next, execution afterward. That is what we should be doing in Iraq.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, this legislation brings us no closer to ending the war in Iraq. It brings us no closer to bringing our troops home. It says nothing about withdrawal, only about redeployment. It says nothing about reducing U.S. presence in the Middle East, and may actually lead to an expanded U.S. presence in the region. We have no guarantee the new strategy demanded by this legislation would not actually expand our military activities to Iran and Syria and beyond. I urge my colleagues to reject this legislation and put forth an effective strategy to end the war in Iraq and to bring our troops home.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today the administration released its ''Assessment Report'' on Iraq. While attempting to tout ''progress,'' it is plain to see that this is more of the same rhetoric that has become so commonplace in this administration. The sad truth is that since President Bush launched this war, more than 3,600 American service men and women have been killed in Iraq, more than 26,000 have been injured, and the American taxpayer has spent nearly half a trillion dollars on this war.

The report highlights that the Iraqi government has not met a single one of the 18 security, political, and economic milestones that the Congress laid out as measurements for success. It also substantiates the fact that of the 18 benchmarks Congress laid out, Iraqis are making progress on only eight. The report also shows us that Iraqi security forces are not providing even-handed enforcement of the law and that Militia presence is still a prevalent force within the security services of a number of ministries.

It is for this reason that I am in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. In addition to requiring the redeployment of American forces this legislation requires the development of a comprehensive strategy for U.S. policy in Iraq and limits missions any remaining forces in Iraq may undertake to duties such as counter-terrorism, and protecting American personnel at the embassy in Iraq.

It has been said that faith without action is merely superstition. We now have the opportunity to change course in this war. My father was a World War II veteran. He died a few months ago at the age of 87. As I looked at the flag draped across his coffin, I thought about the many mothers, fathers and families that had to bury their loved ones, many of them barely adults, and see that flag draped across their caskets.

I, along with the American people, have no more patience with regards to this war in Iraq. I've been to three deployments, five funerals and countless memorial services; I don't want to go to any more. I want to be able to go to one last homecoming celebration when we can bring an end to this war.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army myself, I strongly support our troops, our veterans and their families. Our troops have done everything they have been asked to do and done it exceptionally well. I am tremendously proud of all the troops from North Carolina and across America who have done their duty so admirably. They are our heroes, and we salute them. But as the Representative for Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, I am very concerned about the state of readiness of America's armed forces.

I have traveled to Iraq twice, and after I returned last year, I said the Administration must change this failed policy. Specifically, I said that we need more focus on the threat of international terrorists. The National Counterterrorism Center has released a report today entitled: ''Al-Qaida Better Positioned To Strike the West'' that concludes Osama Bin Laden's network has been reconstructed while America's military is bogged down in the civil war in Iraq, with no end in sight.

H.R. 2956, written by Chairman IKE SKELTON of the Armed Services Committee, one of the most respected Members of this body and an expert on military policy, is a good first step for this needed new direction. It requires the Iraqi leaders to begin to provide for the security of their own country by redeploying American combat troops from the sectarian civil war and reconstituting our readiness and transitioning American forces to the mission of effective counterterrorism anywhere in the world where radical jihadists threaten America and our interests. Let me be clear that H.R. 2956 maintains the flexibility of the Commander in Chief to direct the operations of the armed forces. It simply calls for a change in policy and public accountability for a comprehensive U.S. strategy for Iraq.

North Carolina's senior Senator stated it well this week when she said, ''It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008.'' This bill begins to do just that. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for it.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of ''H.R. 2956, The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act,'' and had I been on the floor today, I would have voted ''yes.''

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to the fact that I was given the high honor of receiving the NAACP Spingarn Award. However, this is an extremely important piece of legislation. One of our greatest responsibilities is the protection of our soldiers. The Democrats are determined to end this war and bring our young men and women back home. H.R. 2956 will now provide such a policy that will allow us to meet our national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region by maintaining a minimal force. The Administration has provided a failed policy and it is time for a new direction. We understand that this transition must be well thought out and handled responsibly; with a view toward an enduring national security interest in the region.

This legislation, acknowledges that our military has accomplished the mission they were given in the original 2002 authorization to use force and that Iraq must now take leadership for its own future. For years Democrats have advocated for the responsible redeployment of American forces from Iraq. The relocation and redistribution of our soldiers is long overdue and enough American lives have been sacrificed for a failed policy. Democrats have argued that the Iraqis must take primary accountability for their country and their security. American presence in Iraq must be re-focused away from playing referee in a civil war. We must focus and limit our efforts to military missions such as counter-terrorism, training Iraqi security forces and protecting American personnel at the embassy.

The bill requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008. The bill also requires a comprehensive strategy by January 1, 2008 for U.S. policy in Iraq, including a discussion of American national security interests in Iraq and the broader region, the specific missions remaining forces would undertake, and minimum force levels required to accomplish them. Finally, it requires the President to submit updates on the use of and need for any forces remaining in Iraq every 90 days starting on July 1, 2008. The President has been given ample time to bring our soldiers home. It is now time for us to act on their behalf.

I am committed to the homecoming of our brave men and women who have so valiantly completed their mission. So, I am honored to support this legislation.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2956, Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act of 2007.

For months, I, along with many of my colleagues in this chamber, have been calling on the President to forge a new direction with the war in Iraq. Our pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

Despite failing to meet his own benchmarks of progress, despite new reports of the unsustainable cost of this war, despite the tremendous dissatisfaction and disenchantment of the American people and members of his own party—the President recently made public statements to the effect that he is unwilling to change the course and try a new strategy.

The American people are dissatisfied with the deteriorating situation in Iraq. They are tired of finger-pointing and political gamesmanship. They want some answers, and they quite rightly expect and deserve one. As their elected representatives and leaders, I believe it is our responsibility in Congress to work together to move this country forward to an honest solution.

It is clear that American troops have accomplished their military mission. Yet we have now tasked them with forging political compromise as well, leaving them in the middle of a burgeoning civil war in Iraq. It is widely recognized that the sectarian strife taking place in Iraq right now cannot be solved through military means alone, and the President's refusal to entertain any new strategies has put our troops in an untenable position. I cannot continue in good conscience to ask our brave troops to risk their lives because I don't believe their sacrifice is being met with an equal commitment from the Iraqi people. The tough but necessary political compromises are not being made.

While the Iraqis are moving toward a transparent and effective government, what is missing is the necessary political accommodation to move the country towards reconciliation. Unfortunately, Iraqis by themselves appear incapable of achieving political progress. Instead, years later, they continue to lean on the United States and our military for stability, teetering on the brink of full-blown civil war without the will to make the political compromises necessary to peace.

Be assured that I am the last person in this chamber that wants to take irresponsible actions that would take the country into complete chaos. But American military power is not the solution to the war. More troops, more time, more money—these are not the answers. Congress needs to understand, as the American people do, that we must begin planning for a responsible withdrawal and redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. H.R. 2956 provides for a safe and orderly reduction of troops in Iraq and a transition to a limited presence of American troops in country for force protection, training of Iraqi Security Forces, and counterterrorism missions. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

We must send a clear message to the Iraqi government that the patience of the American people is not endless, and that they must take control of their future. Passage of H.R. 2956 will help send that message.

I believe strongly that we must not wait any longer to send this message. The time to act is now, to force the hand of this Administration and the Iraqi government. Waiting any longer will simply lead to more fatalities for U.S. soldiers, Iraqi military, and civilians.

Finally, 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. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill because I strongly support a responsible redeployment of our troops from Iraq.

It should not have been necessary for us to consider this bill today. Back in March, I voted for, and Congress passed, legislation that would have begun a draw-down of combat troops in favor of a disengagement strategy in Iraq. Regrettably, however, the president vetoed that legislation and then moved in exactly the opposite direction by escalating the number of troops committed to Iraq.

So, while a war can't be effectively led by committee, by failing to exercise responsible leadership, the president continues to make it necessary for Congress to assert itself. And thus the House is acting again today—and whatever the outcome, we will act again and again until we find the necessary support to change course in Iraq.

The war in Iraq has cost this Nation the blood of its soldiers, the treasure of its citizens, and the good will of our allies around the world. The average number of attacks, Iraqi civilian deaths, and coalition deaths are all at their highest levels since the invasion. Over 3,600 American soldiers have died in Iraq, and we are spending over $10 billion every month to continue this failed policy.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I must point out that the time is rapidly approaching when we will not be able to sustain the numbers of troops now deployed in Iraq without calling back our National Guard and Reserve for second or third tours or extending the tours of current active duty troops beyond the already extended 15 months.

And our increasing military and financial commitment to Iraq limits our options for addressing other critical national security concerns even as a new intelligence report indicates that al Qaeda is operationally stronger than a year ago. The most disturbing news is that al Qaeda has regrouped to an extent not seen since 2001.

Proponents of the President's escalation—the so-called ''surge''—say we haven't given it a chance to succeed. But it has been under way since January, with the Iraqi government fully aware of the steps toward reconciliation it needs to take to enable U.S. forces to stay—and still, those steps aren't being taken. Today's interim report from the Pentagon tries to make a bad situation look better, listing ''satisfactory'' progress on a number of benchmarks required by the Congress several months ago. But in reality, as the report states, ''the security situation in Iraq remains complex and extremely challenging,'' the ''economic picture is uneven'' and political reconciliation is lagging.

I had hoped that by holding the president and the Iraqi government accountable for achieving these benchmarks, we would gain the leverage necessary to pressure the Iraqi government to forge the political solution we all know is required. But it appears that the Iraqi government is either unable or unwilling to bring its feuding factions together to achieve these goals.

The Pentagon's report blames those of us pushing for redeployment for the lack of progress toward political reconciliation, saying it has been hampered by ''increasing concern among Iraqi political leaders that the United States may not have a long term-commitment to Iraq.''

But if the Iraqis won't make progress when we're there—and then threaten that they can't make progress if we leave—under what conditions will we see progress? The president has asked Congress to wait to act for the next progress report due in September. But what are we waiting for? He has dressed up his new approaches in many different ways since this war started over four years ago, and yet little has changed.

What we need—and what many Democrats and Republicans alike are calling for—is a responsible redeployment from Iraq. That is what the bipartisan Iraq Study Group ultimately called for, and that is the main reason I introduced legislation to implement its recommendations. I continue to hold out hope that we can forge a bipartisan consensus in favor of adopting the ISG as a foundation for a phased withdrawal strategy. I believe in this approach because responsible redeployment would allow Iraqis to take control of their own security by reducing U.S. combat forces while limiting the U.S. military to missions such as counter-terrorism, protecting U.S. Embassy personnel, and training Iraqi security forces. This bill will also allow necessary flexibility for our military forces to continue strikes against al Qaeda in Iraq.

This legislation calls for the beginning of redeployment and a troop draw-down within the next four months. It takes a different approach from H.R. 2237, the bill introduced by Representative JIM MCGOVERN (D–MA) that I opposed two months ago, in that it would not prohibit funding for our troops already in Iraq, and it requires the president to submit a comprehensive strategy providing specific plans for diplomatic initiatives and justifying the number of U.S. troops who would remain and explaining their missions.

I do question whether we can extricate all combat troops by April 2008, as it calls for—it could take as long as six months to move over one hundred thousand soldiers and their gear and to do this safely. This is one military exercise that we have to take seriously and spend time and resources to plan—because it could mean life or death for our men and women in uniform. But I believe we should set a target date now and begin this planning. This bill would force a change in strategy and mandate the start of a phased withdrawal and redeployment, and that is why I will vote for it.

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Delivering the solemn promise we made to set a new direction in Iraq, this legislation provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm our support for the responsible redeployment of our troops and a refocusing of our efforts on the real threat that is facing America—fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America.

Along with a great many of my colleagues, I spoke out against the President's surge strategy when it was announced in January. We argued then, as we reiterate today, that Iraq is engaged in a civil war and thus political, not military, solutions are needed to address the problems facing the region. Yet, the President continues to operate under the assumption that somehow, some way, there is a military path to success. In other words, his strategy continues to be ''stay the course'' writ large.

It has now been seven months since the President announced his surge strategy, with the stated goal of providing stability in Iraq so that the political reforms that are needed to secure the region can take place. Since then, more than 25,000 additional troops have deployed to Iraq, of whom 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded. All of this while the Iraqi government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January, violence rates are at an all time high, and a recent government report estimates that al Qaeda is the strongest it has been since the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Simply put, it is long past time for our involvement in this tragic episode to come to an end. The Iraqi people are the only ones that can bring a peaceful conclusion to this war.

It is unfair to ask our troops and their families to continue to sacrifice while Iraqi leaders have done so little to achieve the political and security goals asked of them. Therefore, it is imperative that we begin the gradual redeployment of troops as soon as possible to protect their lives and ensure the safety of America.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate my opposition 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 Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act because I believe it is time to bring our troops home and end our involvement in this civil war.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, and I thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership and his dedication to the readiness of our troops and the continuing excellence of the United States armed forces.

The President continues to ask this Congress and the American people to ''stay the course'' in Iraq. Well, Mr. President, today the American people and the Congress say, ''No more!!''

Instead, I add my voice once again to the growing number of retired military generals, the Iraq Study Group, and untold thousands of rank-and-file on the front lines who are calling for a new direction in Iraq.

The success of our military depends on a sound strategy. Yet, instead of fighting terrorists in the mountains of Afghanistan, our armed forces are overextended after four years of refereeing a civil war in the sands of Iraq.

The President's escalation of this war,—his so-called ''surge''—is not working. That much is clear. Since the escalation of this war 6 months ago, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, 600 more U.S. soldiers have died and more than 3,000 troops have been wounded. Countless thousands of Iraqis are dead, and today the violence in Iraq is at an all-time high!

Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq, but the Iraqi government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January. Political reconciliation within Iraq is non-existent. A change of course is long overdue.

The time has come for the United States to responsibly re-deploy our troops from Iraq and to refocus our efforts on protecting Americans from terrorism. The time has come for Iraqis to take primary responsibility for their country and their security.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will do exactly that.

Let me be clear on one additional point. Democrats support the troops. As a Member of the Appropriations Committee, I have consistently voted to fund our troops and provide our soldiers in the line of fire with the resources they need.

I do this because our brave service men and women are not risking their lives each and every day for one political party or the other. They are risking their lives for America.

Our Nation owes our troops a strategy that is worthy of their sacrifice. But ''stay the course'' is not that strategy. It is a slogan that continues to fail them.

No, Mr. Speaker, if we really want to support our troops, it is now time to get them out of Iraq and re-deploy them to other areas where they can fight the terrorists who have attacked, and who continue to threaten our Nation.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.''

This legislation mandates that we begin withdrawing our troops from Iraq within 120 days of enactment. This redeployment would have to be completed by April 2008. This is a commonsense measure to bring an end to our military involvement in Iraq. Frankly it is mindboggling that American troops are still fighting there in the first place.

For over 4 years we have worked to establish a secure, safe, and peaceful democracy in Iraq. Our military has done a valiant job in doing everything we asked of it. We have lost over 3,600 soldiers and more than 26,000 have been wounded in this effort. We have spent about $450 billion. Unfortunately, death and destruction still reign in Iraq.

President George W. Bush's plan is not working and the evidence of failure is mounting. President Bush announced his troop

''surge'' 6 months ago. During that time about 600 troops have been killed, 3,000 have been wounded, and $60 billion has been spent. The recently released White House interim report shows there to have been unsatisfactory progress by the Iraqi government in meeting many of the benchmarks laid out by President Bush back in January.

With respect to President Bush's political benchmarks, the Iraqi government has made unsatisfactory progress on all of them. What this Iraqi civil war requires is an Iraqi political compromise, but the available evidence suggests that no one within the government is willing to make the sacrifices needed to make that happen. Why should American soldiers continue to sacrifice under such circumstances? Not one more drop of American blood should be shed in pursuit of President Bush's failed Iraq policy.

The American people agree. Recent polling shows that over 60 percent of the American people now believe sending troops to Iraq was a mistake and 71 percent support withdrawing our forces by April 2008, just as H.R. 2956 would require.

Despite the views of the American public and the clear evidence on the ground that our continued military presence in Iraq is not the solution, President Bush stubbornly refuses to change course and bring our troops home. Congress has the power and obligation to do what is right and force a new policy. Passing H.R. 2956 is the first step on that road, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this reasoned legislation.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill to begin a responsible redeployment of our forces now in Iraq. The defense of our homeland is paramount and we are vulnerable for an attack. The war in Iraq has damaged the readiness of our military. Our ability to defend our Nation is at stake.

Today's report on benchmarks is further evidence that this Administration can only see the situation in Iraq through rose-colored glasses. It's time for serious policy makers—for American patriots—to find a way out of Iraq so we can focus on defending our Nation against al Qaeda, as well as other threats to national security.

This administration has no plan to defend the United States, and they did great damage to the defense of this country with the ''catch and release'' operation they had on our southern border. ''Catch and release'' sent all non-Mexicans who came in illegally to the interior of the Nation with a paper compelling them to return for deportation.

By virtue of ''catch and release'' we face the prospect of possibly hundreds of cells already in country awaiting an attack order.

What happens if al Qaeda attacks a nuclear facility? Do we have a plan for that? Who moves into defensive and containment posture? Do we even have the troops presently in country to provide that defense and containment?

What happens if there is an attack on a military base? There will be military officials nearby, but how will they respond?

What happens if there is a bio-chemical attack in an American city? Who responds—and how will our citizens be protected?

A shoulder launched weapon from a building top in New York, Washington DC, or another major American city would be devastating . . . and show our lack of preparation 6 years after 9/11 when many of us ran from these buildings, not sure we would ever see them again.

Today's report about the resurgence of al Qaeda is no surprise for us. Ever since Congress was deliberately misled by the President into authorizing the Iraq war in 2002, the war in Iraq sucked precious resources away from our focus on al Qaeda. When we invaded Iraq in 2003, the Iraq al Qaeda presence was in a single village in Kurdistan along the Iranian border. Today, it is impossible to estimate the number of al Qaeda fighters we have drawn to Iraq through our invasion.

We inadvertently aided al Qaeda through our invasion of Iraq by giving al Qaeda a recruitment opportunity for radical Muslims throughout the Middle East; giving al Qaeda the means to perfect urban warfare; tying down our military in Iraq, giving al Qaeda space to grow and operate, and most urgently, deeply damaging the readiness of the U.S. military and making the U.S. less safe for ourselves and our children.

At least one branch of this government must begin the painfil process of finding an ending to our involvement in a civil war we facilitated.

Many colleagues here seem to believe our withdrawal will leave behing an even bloodier civil war. I agree; but that will be the case whenever we leave there . . . be it today, tomorrow, next year, or a decade from now. The only difference we can make in that regard is how many American souls will die on the Iraqi battlefield between now and the day our forces withdraw.

Others have pinned all hope on the fledgling Iraqi government seated on March 16, 2005 . . . a government that has been unable to elect a Speaker for their Parliament and rarely produces a quorum. We have lost 1,282 American soldiers during the same time.

Bear in mind, al Qaeda is not the only threat we face in the future . . . North Korea, the militarization of South America . . . and many other threats are a reality for this nation in the decade to come. We must be prepared for all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of this bill.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

It is long past time that the disaster in Iraq is brought to an end.

The President's failed policy in Iraq has been repudiated by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, his inability to extricate the United States from a quagmire in the desert has been rejected by the voters, and we must change course. The President has proven himself to be either blind to the reality on the ground in Iraq or simply uncaring of what that reality means for the stability of the Middle East and the security of the United States of America.

The President took this country to war on false premises. There were no weapons of mass destruction, there was no imminent threat, there were no operational ties to al-Qaeda. And the administration knew, because we had U.N. weapons inspectors on the ground in Iraq for months before the invasion, that the so-called ''intelligence'' pointing to an active and dangerous Iraqi WMD program was simply wrong. Over and over again, Hans Blix and his teams of inspectors would launch surprise visits on sites that the CIA had pointed them to, and over and over again the U.S. intelligence would be proved incorrect.

We have been fighting in Iraq longer than we fought in the Second World War. Within a few months, we will have spent more money in Iraq than we did in the more than 10 years we were in Vietnam. And while a very small segment of our citizenry is being asked to make the ultimate sacrifice for this adventure by sending their loved ones to war, the Bush administration has given billions of dollars in tax breaks to the richest Americans. If this war were truly a national struggle, underpinned by the faith and support of the public, the sacrifices would be shared by all instead of borne by the few.

Since President Bush infamously declared ''Mission Accomplished'' over 4 years ago, the situation has only gotten worse and worse. The administration never had a plan to win the peace, and still does not, and as a result the peace cannot be won. Our brave men and women in uniform are caught in the midst of a multifaceted civil war which can only be brought to an end with political reconciliation, not military engagement.

Unfortunately, the President stubbornly refuses to understand the nature of the conflict into which he has dragged us. He refuses to change course, but more of the same cannot any longer be an option. We must extricate ourselves from a sectarian civil war which is bleeding our military every single day. This bill will begin the responsible redeployment of US forces out of Iraq within 120 days, and complete that deployment by April 1, 2008. On that date, we will have been in Iraq for more than 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Chairman SKELTON for bringing this resolution before us and I urge its adoption.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and urge my colleagues to support the bill.

It has become painfully obvious that the White House is incapable of changing course in Iraq. The Bush administration's talking points about the situation in Iraq change from week to week, but the fundamental strategy remains the same. The President is determined that our troops will remain in Iraq no matter what.

The latest White House talking points are aimed at getting the American people to believe that the surge in Iraq just began a couple weeks ago, instead of 6 months ago. In fact, the President announced the surge back on January 10, and the troop escalation began in early February.

The White House is emphasizing today that it finds that Iraq is making ''satisfactory'' progress in some areas, such as the cooperation between U.S. forces and tribal sheiks in Anbar province as well as the formation of a Constitutional Review Committee, although the constitutional review itself is not complete. The reality is that the Iraqi Government has not approved a law to share Iraq's oil wealth. It has not enacted legislation to reform the De-Ba'athification laws. It has not disarmed the militias. It has not made progress on ensuring that Iraqi Security Forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law. It has not made progress toward increasing the number of Iraqi Security Forces units capable of operating independently. It has not made satisfactory progress toward establishing a date for provincial elections.

In the past 6 months, nearly 600 of our troops have died. More than 13,000 Iraqis have died. The level of violence in Iraq has not decreased. The violence and attacks have

simply shifted away from places where our forces are concentrated.

Six months into the surge, there is no indication that the Iraqis are coming together to make the political decisions necessary to end the sectarian violence that is tearing their country apart. Time has shown that whatever small chance there is of the Iraqi factions coming together, it will not happen as long as the U.S. military commitment in Iraq remains open-ended. We need to change course. The bill before the House does just that. It requires the Department of Defense to begin a phased and orderly redeployment of our combat troops from Iraq starting in 120 days of enactment, with the troop reduction to be complete by April 1, 2008. No other way has worked to convince the Iraqis that they need to step up and reach a political settlement to end the sectarian violence.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I commend my good friend and colleague, Armed Services Chairman IKE SKELTON, for authoring H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.'' the Democratic Congress has drawn a line in the sand with this bill. It requires accountability from the Administration that the American people demand and deserve: stop the open-ended commitment in Iraq; stop the surge; and, stop sending our brave men and women in uniform to fight a ''winnable'' war. We have given this Administration enough time, enough U.S. blood, and too much hard-earned American dollars.

Let's call this war what it is—a civil war.

The solution for Iraq is not military. The solution for Iraq is political and diplomatic. We must once again engage our allies and Iraq's neighbors to renew a quest for a peaceful solution in Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2956. Support our valiant troops by voting to bring them home. Now.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, in January, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki publicly committed to meeting a set of benchmarks, including quelling sectarian violence, disarming sectarian militias and developing a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

In May, Congress, in a bipartisan way, made clear that the Iraqi government should be held accountable for meeting those benchmarks and required the President to report on the Iraqi Government's progress in meeting those goals.

That report, which was released today, demonstrates the President's surge is failing and that the Iraqi Government is failing to meet the benchmarks it agreed to meet 7 months ago.

The Iraqi Government has not moved toward national reconciliation. This morning, we learned that Director of Central Intelligence General Michael Hayden, an accomplished four-star general, told the bipartisan Iraq Study Group 8 months ago that Iraq's leaders are ''unable to govern.''

Now, the inability of the Iraqi Government to govern seems irreversible. If there is no functioning government in Iraq, how do we expect to fix the problems in that country militarily?

We continue to see the serious consequences that result from that inability to govern. Sectarian violence has not been quelled; it continues to escalate. Sectarian militias have not been disarmed; they continue to wreak havoc. There has been no progress on a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

The situation is rapidly deteriorating and American troops are caught in the crossfire.

Continued U.S. involvement in Iraq must be contingent on the Iraqi Government keeping its word. Benchmarks without accountability are not benchmarks at all. They are blank checks. And I refuse to allow the Iraqi Government, or any government, to have a blank check on American lives.

The time has come to redeploy American troops from Iraq and reduce the U.S. military role in Iraq. We must do so in a responsible way that will help us better meet our strategic objectives and renew our fight against global terrorism.

I am convinced that this course, combined with stepping up our diplomatic efforts, provide the best opportunity to achieve our strategic objectives, reduce sectarian violence and force Iraq's leaders to get serious about Iraqi reconciliation and stabilization efforts.

As their failure to meet the benchmarks clearly illustrates, Iraq's leaders are unwilling and incapable of moving toward national reconciliation. If the United States allows the Iraqi government to have an open-ended timetable to meet these benchmarks, and demands no accountability, our troops may literally be in harm's way forever. We cannot continue to allow the safety of our troops to be placed in the hands of Iraqi leaders who have failed to keep their word or are incapable of meeting their obligations.

Make no mistake: the deteriorating situation in Iraq is not a result of military failure. Our nation's armed forces crushed Saddam Hussein's regime in one of the most complete and impressive military victories in the history of our country.

The disaster in Iraq is a result of the Bush Administration's failure to plan and failure to listen. It is a result of misplaced trust in the Malaki government. It is a result of mismanagement and incompetence.

Even worse, the administration's failed policy in Iraq has limited the success of our mission in Afghanistan, and hindered our ability to destroy al Qaeda's international operations. As a result, U.S. intelligence analysts say al Qaeda is the strongest it has ever been since the September 11, 2001, attacks. We must renew our commitment to leading the fight against global terrorism and destroying al Qaeda.

Our Nation is at a critical crossroad in Iraq, and Congress has a difficult choice to make. But one thing is clear: staying the course is not an option. We can ill afford to continue down the same course of failure that has undermined our mission in Iraq, and undermined our ability to protect our Nation from terrorist threats.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill. If enacted, this act would compel the President to begin redeploying our troops from Iraq not later than 120 days after it becomes law. It creates the appropriate framework and mechanisms for ensuring an orderly withdrawal of our forces, and it puts the responsibility for Iraq's security where it belongs—on the Iraqis.

But once again, the President has declared—long before this bill was brought to the House floor—that he would veto it or any other measure that attempted to correct his failed policy in Iraq. He has become intransigent and disconnected from the reality on the ground in Iraq, and indifferent to the will of the American people.

The President's much-vaunted ''surge'' has been underway for 6 months now, and the results are obvious: Iraq is no less violent and chaotic than before the ''surge'' began. Indeed, American casualties—both killed and wounded—have been on the rise for nearly a year, long before the surge started. By pouring more troops into Iraq, the President has simply given the insurgents more targets to shoot at.

Perhaps, even worse, he is ruining our ability to work with other countries to foster peace in the Middle East, and he is fanning the flames of a conflagration that is now likely to engulf other countries around Iraq.

The President's refusal to change course in Iraq is an enormous injustice to the brave Americans he has put in harm's way. Our troops accomplished the goal of removing Saddam Hussein from power more than 4 years ago. They accomplished the mission that they were given—and then were given another mission for which they were not provided the proper equipment and resources: being forced to act as referees in Iraq's growing civil war. Our troops deserve better.

Moreover, the President and his advisors have continued their well-established pattern of moving the goal post on his Iraq policy. Every year, the Congress has been told that Iraq's security forces would be ready to assume responsibility for their country's security in 12 to 18 months. And every time we reached that 12 to 18 month benchmark, the Administration would reset the goal post another 12 to 18 months down the road. The American people have had enough of this bait-and-switch game. Iraqis must accept responsibility for their country's future.

Indeed, the President's troop increase has played into the hands of Iraq's current government, which continues to claim that the additional American forces are needed to quell the violence—without mentioning that it is Prime Minister Maliki's own policies that are helping to fuel that violence. Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to purge his security forces of militias and sectarian death squads is a prime reason why Sunni insurgents continue their attacks against Iraq's security forces. Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to compromise on the distribution of power and oil revenue among Iraqis is why the insurgency has only gained in intensity over the past year. How long will we continue to provide military and financial support to his corrupt and ineffectual government? How much longer should our brave fighting men and women serve as referees in the middle of a spreading civil war?

If passed, this bill would compel Iraq's leaders to face the fact that we will not continue to indefinitely provide for their country's security with the lives of America's military men and women, and that they must take the necessary political steps needed to end the violence. It is for all of these reasons that I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of ending the War in Iraq.

Last November, the American people demanded a new direction for Iraq. Today, the new Democratic Congress is taking a concrete step toward bringing our troops home.

The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act sends a loud and clear message to President Bush. It requires the President to begin withdrawing American forces in the next 120

days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

This legislation is an important and historic step forward, but it does not go far enough. I support the immediate withdrawal of all American troops.

Not next year. Not next month. Today.

I oppose additional funding for the war because the situation in Iraq isn't getting better, it's getting worse. Since Bush announced his intent to escalate the war and deploy an additional 20,000 American troops, 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

And for what? The administration just acknowledged in a congressionally mandated report that since the ''surge,'' there has been little to no progress on a host of political, security and economic benchmarks proposed by the President himself.

In total, the war has taken the lives of more than 3,600 American service men and women and injured more than 26,000. Countless innocent Iraqis have been killed or maimed.

This loss of life is obscene and must stop.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2956 and commit to withholding additional money for Iraq when Congress debates the next war funding bill in September.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker just a little over a week ago I traveled to Fort Bragg in North Carolina to see yet another 100 men and women of the Virgin Islands National Guard off to Iraq.

Among those who left on Sunday and are now deployed, there are several who are doing their second tour as well as a father and his daughter.

It was not easy, but I put my best face forward while there because I knew that it was much harder—extremely difficult—for their families.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I could smile and be upbeat in my message to them is because I knew Democrats would be here today, passing this measure to set a time limit for our troops to be deployed in Iraq and to begin their return home.

And so Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this resolution as the first step to ending U.S. involvement in the civil war that Iraq has become. And I will be here in full support on the efforts that will follow to close Guantanamo and to ensure that the White House responds in a timely and appropriate manner to what they are being directed to do in H.R. 2956 today.

And I hope we will insist that he does so long before January 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to once again applaud your leadership and that of Chairman IKE SKELTON.

Because of H.R. 2956, ''The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act'', and the measures that will follow, I am confident we will see a day, in the not too distant future, when no other American or son or daughter of our allies will die for a war we cannot justify.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, the Greek historian Herodotus is often called the ''father of history.'' In his work, The Histories, he attempted to chronicle the origin and outcome of the Greco-Persian War so that future generations could learn from experience. Unfortunately, for the men and women in Iraq and their families and for the American people, President Bush refuses to use what we have learned to revise our strategy for Iraq, redeploy our troops, and refocus on the priorities and protection of America's families.

The President continues to insist that America's involvement in the war in Iraq is an integral part of the war on terrorism. The Iraq Study Group, among other objective observers, repeatedly refuted this statement. Perhaps worse than this statement is that, despite the President's claims, the evidence indicates that progress is not being made in Iraq:

America's families unjustly continue to bear the burden of war; they have paid the price with the loss of 3,600 lives and with injuries to 26,000 service men and women. The order of nature has been violated—fathers and mothers are burying their sons and daughters. How many more of our loved ones will pay the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom of others?

America's families have paid more than $450 billion in taxes that have been use to fund failure instead of our future. We build stronger families and a stronger America when we provide our citizens with access to quality education, affordable housing and healthcare, well-paying jobs, and financial security. How much more will we spend before we realize that the very foundation of our future has crumbled beneath our feet?

The Iraqi Government has failed to meet critical benchmarks endorsed by the President in January. The President has said, ''when they stand up, we'll stand down.'' The Iraqis have not amended their Constitution, passed an equitable oil sharing law, reformed laws to provide government jobs to former members of the Ba'ath Party, or held provincial elections. When are the Iraqis going to stand up?

Seventy percent of Americans support withdrawing almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 2008; half do not believe that the increase in U.S. forces since January of this year has made a difference. In addition, several Republicans have joined Democrats in calling for a new direction in Iraq. However, the President continues to wage a war with complete disregard for the concerns of the American people and the counsel of military leaders. When will the President connect the dots and see that the picture he has drawn is not a pretty one?

The Iraq Study Group stated that the use of the military in Iraq has passed; it is time for diplomacy to take place. Regrettably, diplomacy has not been seriously considered by the President, and internecine warfare and outright civil war has filled the vacuum of this viable option in Iraq. Also, the refugee problem in Iraq has worsened the situation in the Middle East; to date, the United States has taken in less than 200 refugees from Iraq after promising to take in thousands. Why haven't we taken in more refugees or fully allowed diplomacy to bear fruit?

These are among the many reasons why I support H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. I have opposed this war from the beginning and have been engaged in a continuing fight to change course. While our troops have performed heroically, violence remains high, and we must remove them from harm's way; we must require Iraqis to take responsibility for their own fate, and we must refocus on investing in America's families. This legislation—which is consistent with the advice of military and foreign policy experts, ensures the safety of our men and women in uniform, addresses our commitment to fighting terrorism, and reflects the will of the American people—allows us to do just that. This bill:

Acknowledges that our military has accomplished the mission they were given in the original 2002 authorization to use force and that Iraq is now responsible for its own future.

Requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

Reiterates that the redeployment must be done in a safe and orderly way, with maximum attention paid to the protection of American forces.

Requires a comprehensive strategy by January 1, 2008, for U.S. policy in Iraq, including a discussion of American national security interests in Iraq and the broader region, the specific missions remaining forces would undertake, and minimum force levels required to accomplish them.

Names specific missions that the President must consider, but it does not require or authorize those missions.

Requires the President to submit updates on the use of and need for any forces remaining in Iraq every 90 days starting on July 1, 2008.

Dag Hammarskjold, a Swedish statesman and United Nations official, once said, ''There is a point at which everything becomes simple and there is no longer any question of choice, because all you have staked will be lost if you look back. This is life's point of no return.'' Certainly, the President and administration have reached that point. For them, the decision to stay the course is simple because it is too difficult to admit failure. However, as the representative for 670,000 of God's best in Michigan's 13th Congressional District, I am willing to make the hard choices. I believe the majority of my colleagues are, too.

The President can no longer afford to let his pride get in the way of making the right decision. Our troops, our families, our international reputation, and our future are at stake.

In the Bible, we read in Chronicles 7:14 that ''If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves . . . and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and . . . will heal their land.'' The international community—the billions of us who inhabit our home of planet earth—are children of God. We must learn to walk in the light and in love. It is out of my love of God, my love of the Constitution, my love of this country, and my love of my constituents, that I ask my colleagues to join me in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Ms. LINDA T. SAENCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, today we take a firm stand against the President's tragic war policy in Iraq. Today we vote on H.R. 2956—the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

This legislation is another appeal to a tone-deaf administration that our current path in Iraq is failing. The American people have had enough. They have had enough of the needless bloodshed; they've had enough of the misleading explanations; they've had enough of the broken promises; they've had enough of the lack of vision from this President.

The President's policy is based on false pretenses, for which there are now only imperfect options. After losing more than 3,500 of our servicemembers, and spending close to half a trillion dollars, it is time to bring our troops home. I salute the courage and professionalism of our soldiers who have served our country in Iraq. They overthrew an authoritarian regime and captured a dictator. Now it

is time for our commander-in-chief to bring them home. The ongoing instability in Iraq is a political problem that requires a political solution.

To continue to ask our service men and women to make the ultimate sacrifice for this misguided policy is simply immoral. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation because we must bring our troops home.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 533, the bill is considered read and the previous question is ordered.

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.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MRS. WILSON OF NEW MEXICO

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. In its present form, I am.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mrs. Wilson of New Mexico moves to recommit the bill, H.R. 2956, to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SEC. 1. ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE.

Section 101(f) of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801(f)) is amended to read as follows:

''(f) 'Electronic surveillance' means—

''(1) the installation or use of an electronic, mechanical, or other surveillance device for acquiring information by intentionally directing surveillance at a particular known person who is reasonably believed to be in the United States under circumstances in which that person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes; or

''(2) the intentional acquisition of the contents of any communication under circumstances in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes, if both the sender and all intended recipients are reasonably believed to be located within the United States.''.

□ 1730

The SPEAKER pro tempore. For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I have just received the motion just a few moments ago, and I reserve a point of order against the motion now pending.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. A point of order is reserved.

Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New Mexico is recognized for 5 minutes in support of her motion.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me make the official point of order, if I may.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri is recognized. He has the right to insist upon the point of order.

Mr. SKELTON. I do insist on it as of this moment, Mr. Speaker.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. For what purpose does the gentlewoman from New Mexico rise?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, was I not recognized to explain my motion to recommit?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman raised a point of order, and he had a right to insist upon the point of order, which he so put to the Chair.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. May I speak on the point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. At the appropriate time.

The gentleman from Missouri.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I raise the point of order that the motion to recommit that was just handed to me moments ago, a motion to recommit with instructions, relates to electronic surveillance and is not germane to the bill in front of us, which deals with Iraq, and I claim the point of order that it is not germane and should be stricken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does any other Member wish to be heard on the point of order?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I wish to be heard on the point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New Mexico is recognized.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This motion to recommit would do one very simple and vital thing that is critical to the security of this country, more critical than the underlying resolution itself, and I am begging you and pleading with you to take up this issue.

The motion to recommit would do a very simple thing. It would say that the United States can listen to phone conversations of terrorists overseas without a warrant. Why does that matter? It matters because intelligence is the first line of defense in the war on terror, and we are now knowingly operating with our fingers in our ears and our hands over our eyes.

Recent testimony in front of this Congress by Director McConnell——

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

The gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. The gentlelady is not addressing the point of order. She's giving a closing argument. I urge the Chair to rule that she must confine her remarks to the point of order that I have raised.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

The Chair reminds the gentlewoman that debate on the point of order must address the point of order and only the point of order.

The gentlewoman from New Mexico.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am addressing the point of order and why it is germane, and I think that that's important for this House to understand, and I will continue with my explanation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman may continue provided the remarks are confined to the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. My remarks will be confined to the importance of the point of order and its germaneness.

Director of National Intelligence McConnell recently said in testimony to this House that we are actually missing a significant portion of what we should be getting. That is true not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but for the war on terror in its whole.

This is critical to the security of this country.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. I urge the Speaker to have the lady confine her remarks to the point of order that is pending before the House.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New Mexico is once again reminded that the remarks on the point of order must be confined to the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is what I am attempting to do.

The question in the point of order has to do with germaneness and the relevance of my motion to recommit to the underlying bill with respect to the Iraq resolution. That is what I'm trying to explain to the House. If my colleague from Missouri would give me a little latitude, I will continue to explain.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri is right. The gentlewoman's remarks are not confined to the point of order at issue before this House.

The gentlewoman may address the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have a responsibility in this House to do things that matter, the things that are in our lap and our responsibility. There is something squarely in the lap of this House, and it

is our responsibility to deal with the national security matters at hand.

We all remember where we were on the morning of 9/11 and what we were doing, who we were with.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. I, again, urge the Chair to request the gentlelady to address the point of order, that this is not germane to the bill regarding Iraq that is before us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's point is taken.

The gentlewoman is once again advised that the remarks on the point of order must confine themselves closely to the point of order. If not, the Chair will recognize other Members to speak on a point of order. If no others seek recognition, the Chair will rule.

Does the gentlewoman from New Mexico wish to proceed?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would wish to proceed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman is recognized.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. The question of germaneness is very important here. The reality is that this underlying bill deals with an issue of national security vital to this country, and the most important vital issue that this body must deal with today is to make sure we have the ability to listen to our enemies. That is the first line of defense in the war on terror, and that is what we are willfully ignoring.

I would urge my colleagues to vote for the motion to recommit, and if this point of order is sustained, I would ask my colleagues to vote to challenge the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request a ruling on my point of order on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does any Member wish to speak on the point of order? If no other Member wishes to address the point of order, the Chair is prepared to rule.

The gentleman makes a point of order that the instructions contained in the motion to recommit offered by the gentlewoman from New Mexico are not germane.

Clause 7 of rule XVI, the germaneness rule, provides that no proposition on a ''subject different from that under consideration shall be admitted under color of amendment.''

One of the central tenets of the germaneness rule is that an amendment should be within the jurisdiction of the committees whose jurisdiction is reflected in the bill.

The bill, H.R. 2956, was referred to the Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Affairs.

The instructions in the motion to recommit offered by the gentlewoman from New Mexico address the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, a law within the jurisdictions of the Committee on the Judiciary and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Because they address a matter outside the jurisdictions broached by the bill, the instructions in the motion to recommit are not germane.

The point of order is sustained. The motion is not in order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I move to appeal the ruling of the Chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is, shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the House?

MOTION TO TABLE OFFERED BY MR. SKELTON

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to table the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to table.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to lay the appeal on the table will be followed by a 5-minute vote on the question of passage, if arising without further debate or proceedings in recommittal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 224, nays 197, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 623]

YEAS—224

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—10

Berkley	Davis, Jo Ann	Tancredo
Conyers	Jindal	Young (AK)
Cubin	Lowey	
Davis (IL)	Paul	

□ 1803

Messrs. TURNER, TOM DAVIS of Virginia, SHUSTER, Mrs. MYRICK, and Mr. TERRY changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, and Messrs. ISRAEL, DINGELL, RUSH, and GORDON of Tennessee changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to table was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 223, nays 201, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 624]

YEAS—223

Abercrombie	Donnelly	Klein (FL)
Ackerman	Doyle	Lampson
Allen	Duncan	Langevin
Altmire	Edwards	Lantos
Andrews	Ellison	Larsen (WA)
Arcuri	Emanuel	Larson (CT)
Baca	Emerson	Lee
Baird	Engel	Levin
Baldwin	Eshoo	Lewis (GA)
Bean	Etheridge	Lipinski
Becerra	Farr	Loebsack
Berman	Fattah	Lofgren, Zoe
Berry	Filner	Lowey
Bishop (GA)	Frank (MA)	Lynch
Bishop (NY)	Giffords	Mahoney (FL)
Blumenauer	Gilchrest	Maloney (NY)
Boswell	Gillibrand	Markey
Boucher	Gonzalez	Matsui
Boyd (FL)	Gordon	McCarthy (NY)
Boyda (KS)	Green, Al	McCollum (MN)
Brady (PA)	Green, Gene	McDermott
Braley (IA)	Grijalva	McGovern
Brown, Corrine	Gutierrez	McIntyre
Butterfield	Hall (NY)	McNerney
Capps	Hare	McNulty
Capuano	Harman	Meek (FL)
Cardoza	Hastings (FL)	Meeks (NY)
Carnahan	Herseth Sandlin	Melancon
Carson	Higgins	Michaud
Castor	Hill	Miller (NC)
Chandler	Hinchey	Miller, George
Clarke	Hinojosa	Mitchell
Clay	Hirono	Mollohan
Cleaver	Hodes	Moore (KS)
Clyburn	Holt	Moore (WI)
Cohen	Honda	Moran (VA)
Cooper	Hooley	Murphy (CT)
Costa	Hoyer	Murphy, Patrick
Costello	Inslee	Murtha
Courtney	Israel	Nadler
Cramer	Jackson (IL)	Napolitano
Crowley	Jackson-Lee (TX)	Neal (MA)
Cuellar	Jefferson	Oberstar
Cummings	Johnson (GA)	Obey
Davis (AL)	Johnson, E. B.	Olver
Davis (CA)	Jones (NC)	Ortiz
Davis (IL)	Jones (OH)	Pallone
Davis, Lincoln	Kagen	Pascrell
DeFazio	Kanjorski	Pastor
DeGette	Kaptur	Payne
Delahunt	Kennedy	Pelosi
DeLauro	Kildee	Perlmutter
Dicks	Kilpatrick	Peterson (MN)
Dingell	Kind	Pomeroy
Doggett	Klein (FL)	Price (NC)
Rahall	Sestak	Udall (NM)
Rangel	Shea-Porter	Van Hollen
Reyes	Sherman	Velázquez
Rodriguez	Shuler	Visclosky
Ross	Sires	Walz (MN)
Rothman	Skelton	Wasserman Schultz
Roybal-Allard	Slaughter	Waters
Ruppersberger	Smith (WA)	Watson
Rush	Solis	Watt
Ryan (OH)	Space	Waxman
Salazar	Spratt	Weiner
Sánchez, Linda T.	Stark	Welch (VT)
Sanchez, Loretta	Stupak	Wexler
Sarbanes	Sutton	Wilson (OH)
Schakowsky	Tanner	Woolsey
Schiff	Tauscher	Wu
Schwartz	Thompson (CA)	Wynn
Scott (GA)	Thompson (MS)	Yarmuth
Scott (VA)	Tierney	
Serrano	Towns	
	Udall (CO)	

NAYS—201

Aderholt	Frelinghuysen	Musgrave
Akin	Gallegly	Myrick
Alexander	Garrett (NJ)	Neugebauer
Bachmann	Gerlach	Nunes
Bachus	Gillmor	Pearce
Baker	Gingrey	Pence
Barrett (SC)	Gohmert	Peterson (PA)
Barrow	Goode	Petri
Bartlett (MD)	Goodlatte	Pickering
Barton (TX)	Granger	Pitts
Biggert	Graves	Platts
Bilbray	Hall (TX)	Poe
Bilirakis	Hastert	Porter
Bishop (UT)	Hastings (WA)	Price (GA)
Blackburn	Hayes	Pryce (OH)
Blunt	Heller	Putnam
Boehner	Hensarling	Radanovich
Bonner	Herger	Ramstad
Bono	Hobson	Regula
Boozman	Hoekstra	Rehberg
Boren	Holden	Reichert
Boustany	Hulshof	Renzi
Brady (TX)	Hunter	Reynolds
Brown (SC)	Inglis (SC)	Rogers (AL)
Brown-Waite, Ginny	Issa	Rogers (KY)
Buchanan	Johnson (IL)	Rogers (MI)
Burgess	Johnson, Sam	Rohrabacher
Burton (IN)	Jordan	Ros-Lehtinen
Buyer	Keller	Roskam
Calvert	King (IA)	Royce
Camp (MI)	King (NY)	Ryan (WI)
Campbell (CA)	Kingston	Sali
Cannon	Kirk	Saxton
Cantor	Kline (MN)	Schmidt
Capito	Knollenberg	Sensenbrenner
Carney	Kucinich	Sessions
Carter	Kuhl (NY)	Shadegg
Castle	LaHood	Shays
Chabot	Lamborn	Shimkus
Coble	Latham	Shuster
Cole (OK)	LaTourette	Simpson
Conaway	Lewis (CA)	Smith (NE)
Crenshaw	Lewis (KY)	Smith (NJ)
Culberson	Linder	Smith (TX)
Davis (KY)	LoBiondo	Snyder
Davis, David	Lucas	Souder
Davis, Tom	Lungren, Daniel E.	Stearns
Deal (GA)	Mack	Sullivan
Dent	Manzullo	Taylor
Diaz-Balart, L.	Marchant	Terry
Diaz-Balart, M.	Marshall	Thornberry
Doolittle	Matheson	Tiahrt
Drake	McCarthy (CA)	Tiberi
Dreier	McCaul (TX)	Turner
Ehlers	McCotter	Upton
Ellsworth	McCrery	Walberg
English (PA)	McHenry	Walden (OR)
Everett	McHugh	Walsh (NY)
Fallin	McKeon	Wamp
Feeney	McMorris Rodgers	Weldon (FL)
Ferguson	Mica	Weller
Flake	Miller (FL)	Westmoreland
Forbes	Miller (MI)	Whitfield
Fortenberry	Miller, Gary	Wicker
Fossella	Moran (KS)	Wilson (NM)
Foxx	Murphy, Tim	Wilson (SC)
Franks (AZ)		Wolf
		Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—8

Berkley	Davis, Jo Ann	Tancredo
Conyers	Jindal	Young (AK)
Cubin	Paul	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1813

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on the Budget:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI,
Office of the Speaker,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: I am writing to officially announce my resignation on this date, Thursday, July 12, 2007, from the House Committee on the Budget, where it has been a true honor to serve.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

BETTY SUTTON,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.

There was no objection.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 540) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 540

Resolved, That the following named Member be and is hereby elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—Ms. Sutton (to rank immediately after Mr. Johnson of Georgia).

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1815

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1851, SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 534 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 534

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for