I would like to take a moment to express my sincere

gratitude and appreciation for Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

I want to thank her for having the vision to organize today's

activities and to say to me and to our other friend Lynn Woolsey: let

us not let this moment pass without reminding this country that it was

10 years ago that we were involved in the invasion of Iraq. Let us talk

about the consequences of that, and let us do everything that we can to

continue to be a voice for peace.

I want to thank you, Barbara Lee, not only for today, but I am

reminded of the courageous action that you took when you warned us,

when there was legislation authorizing the use of military force, that

we should have all been against it. However, you were the lone vote in

the House of Representatives who voted against that authorization. So I

thank you for your work, for your guidance, and for your leadership.

You are absolutely correct. In June of 2005, I became the chair and a

founding member of the Out of Iraq Congressional Caucus, along with

you, Representative Barbara Lee, and, of course, our friend

Representative Lynn Woolsey. As a matter of fact, we became known as

``The Triad.'' I want you to know that a combination of actions that we

took helped to galvanize this Congress and to increase attention on

this very issue. I will never forget the over 441 speeches that were

made on the floor by our friend Congresswoman Woolsey. She is not here

today because she has retired, but we will always remember the care and

concern that she gave to this issue.

On March 19, 2003, the brave men and women of our Armed Forces were

ordered into service in Iraq. In the following years, nearly 4,500 of

those service members did not return home to the United States, and tens

of thousands would come back wounded, injured--their lives changed

forever.

I voted against the war authorization in the first place, and in

hindsight, I know there are many Members who also wish they had voted

against it. It was in that spirit that the Out of Iraq Caucus was

established: to bring to the House of Representatives an ongoing debate

about the war in Iraq and to urge the return of U.S. service members to

their families as soon as possible. The Out of Iraq Caucus provided a

real voice in Congress for the individuals and groups who supported

these efforts.

We had a membership of nearly 80 Representatives from diverse

constituencies. As a caucus, we kept in close communication with

congressional leadership and with committee chairmen to drive Congress

toward our objective of ending the war in Iraq. We also worked with

other congressional caucuses and national organizations to hold

hearings, press conferences, and town hall meetings to educate the

American people and to pressure the Bush administration to conclude the

war in Iraq.

At the time, our most important legislative goal was to end the Iraq

war and bring our troops home to their families. Our work helped define

the national debate on how this could be accomplished.

We again organized community rallies against a war, we marched in

parades, we held press conferences, we worked with the mothers of many

of our young men and women who were in the war, who were serving in the

war, and we worked with many of the veterans organizations.

I, too, offered a series of legislation to buttress our opposition

that our troops must be safely and speedily redeployed from Iraq and

that we must work to restore peace in Iraq.

I introduced bills such as H.R. 3134, Responsible Security in Iraq

Act; H.R. 5488, Iraqi Displacement Coordinator; H.R. 7215, Human Costs

in Iraq Act; H. Res. 1326, Honor Iraq's Sovereignty; and, of course, H.

Res. 1519, Press Freedom in Iraq.

On the 1-year anniversary of the founding of the Out of Iraq Caucus,

I launched a campaign to inform the public about H.J. Res. 73. Ms. Lee,

you will remember John Murtha, the former Member of this House who is

now deceased who introduced H.J. Res.

73, now known as The Murtha Plan, which established a reasonable

timetable for the redeployment of our troops from Iraq. We all worked

with him on that legislation, and we honor him even today for his

wisdom and his foresight.

I want to do just one thing before I have to leave, and that is read

a letter to President Bush that we all sent funding only for

redeployment of troops, if you recall. By the following year in 2007,

we as a caucus delivered a letter to President Bush signed by 92

Members of Congress, which stated our intent to only support war

funding for the safe and orderly redeployment of our U.S. troops from

Iraq.

In the letter, we cited the tremendous human and financial costs of

the President's failed Iraq policy. And because of you, Barbara Lee,

I'd like to share this letter because you were in the leadership of

this. It said:

And it was signed by all 93 Members at that time.

Our efforts gained momentum; and by late 2008, President Bush signed

the Status of Forces agreement, which mandated that the U.S. shall

completely withdraw from Iraq no later than December 31, 2011, and all

U.S. combat forces shall withdraw from Iraq cities before June 3, 2009.

As a caucus, we continue to hold hearings and briefings, as well as

speaking on this very floor until President Obama, who initially

opposed the war, approved an 18-month redeployment plan that would

begin in September of 2009 and end in December of 2011.

Ms. Lee, I'm sorry that I'm going to have to leave the floor because

I have a meeting scheduled with the members of our caucus of the

Financial Services Committee. But I'd like to say before I leave,

again, thank you for your leadership; thank you for your wisdom; thank

you for having always been identified as a woman of peace, a woman who

understood and believed and worked for peace and who has always

believed that whatever our differences are in the world, that we must

find ways to have the kind of diplomacy that can resolve these

differences.

Some people think that this is not possible, but I know that those of

us who believe this will continue to fight and to work for peace on

Earth and goodwill toward all men and women.