Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be back in Washington for

the final session of the 109th Congress. I only wish that the current

leaders on the other side of the aisle had used their final days in the

majority to actually exercise leadership and do something constructive

for the American people. Instead we are here for the lamest of all

possible lame duck sessions.

Just look at what we have done today. With all due respect to my

Resources Committee colleague Mr. Simpson, the Southern Idaho Bureau of

Reclamation Repayment Act of 2006 really isn't one of the most pressing

matters facing our Nation. And what about the Captain John Smith

Chesapeake National Historic Trail Designation Act?

My friends, we are in the middle of a war, a failed war, which a

majority of the American people no longer want any part of; a war

which, by the admission of the President's own choice for Secretary of

Defense, we are not winning. More than 2,900 of our best and brightest

American troops are dead because of this failed policy. At least 46,000

have been wounded, severely wounded. And it is not as if they have

sacrificed for a noble cause. Iraq, which was supposed to spontaneously

blossom into a democracy the minute our troops arrived, has instead

been plunged into a civil war as a direct result of the American

occupation. In fact, a lot of people are saying that ``civil war'' is

really too generous a term for what is happening in Iraq. It is

actually much worse. ``Civil war'' implies two sides battling it out

for state control. What we have here is many factions of thuggish

militia and vigilantes terrorizing the streets and killing

indiscriminately. The director of the CIA recently referred to the

violence as ``Satanic.''

So why then are we spending the people's time and the people's money

deliberating on naming a room in the Capitol? It is no wonder people

have lost confidence in Congress to do the Nation's work effectively.

Instead of doing what we were elected to do, we are waiting with bated

breath for the findings of a blue ribbon commission to tell us what to

do in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, this is political cowardice, pure and simple.

The Congress doesn't want to confront the problem and doesn't want to

challenge the President. So we pass the buck to a group of unelected

so-called wise men who appear prepared to

offer a watered-down compromise that will satisfy actually no one. I

think it is appalling. What are we here to do if not to address the

issues of national security, war and peace, and life and death?

And the White House, meanwhile, persists in a stubborn state of

denial. The President continues to say he will not leave until the

mission is complete, but at this point there is no clear mission nor

how to know when it is complete. As he consistently has, the President

is leaving open the very real possibility that our troops will be in

Iraq for as long as he occupies the Oval Office.

The White House obviously wasn't listening to the message that was

sent on November 7. But we are a co-equal branch of government, and we

owe it to the American people to push for a course correction in Iraq.

Obviously we won't make any progress on that front this week, but I

look forward to the new year when the quacking stops and we will have a

new Congress with a mandate and the fortitude to bring an end to this

disastrous occupation and to bring our troops home.