Mr. Speaker, as we gather here, President Obama is at

Fort Bragg honoring and thanking our men and women in uniform for their

service in the war in Iraq and for the sacrifices they've been willing

to make to keep us the home of the brave and the land of the free.

America's brave men and women in uniform have done everything that

has been asked of them. They have performed with valor, with courage,

with patriotism and a dedication to duty.

It is because of our troops and the leadership of President Obama

that this month we will be able to say that the war in Iraq is over,

our troops are coming home for the holidays with their families. As we

thank our troops, we also thank the families of our men and women in

uniform for the sacrifices they have been willing to make for our

country.

President Obama promised to end the war in Iraq responsibly. Promise

made, promise kept. When he took office, nearly 150,000 American troops

were deployed in Iraq. This month our troop presence will wind down to

just around a few thousand. In winding down the war, the President

honored the wishes of the American people.

As we mark the end of the war, we honor the nearly 4,500 Americans

who made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq. Tens of thousands more have

been wounded. We will never forget those who were lost in the war. We

will forever be grateful to them and to their families.

I'm from Baltimore, Maryland. When my father was mayor, they built

Baltimore stadium. What would they call it? The consensus name was

Baltimore Memorial Stadium to honor those who made so much sacrifice

for our country. General Pershing said, and that was engraved on

Baltimore Memorial Stadium,

Time will not, indeed, dim the glory of those who served and

sacrificed in Iraq.

I'm particularly proud to have presided over 4 years of a Congress

that made more progress for our veterans and military families than has

been made since the passage of the original GI Bill in 1944.

But our work is not done. On the battlefield, the military says we

will leave no soldier behind. And when they come home, we promised,

Democrats and Republicans working together, to leave no veteran behind.

Over a million of our men and women in uniform served in Iraq. We

must honor their service with economic opportunities and the benefits

they deserve. We must remember that our commitment to our veterans is

not while they serve or even for life. It is a commitment forever, to

them and their families.

We must build a future worthy of their sacrifice. As the war in Iraq

comes to an end, we express our enormous gratitude to those who have

served. Because of them, we express our great optimism for the future.