Mr. Chairman, I just want to make mention, without

repeating what the gentlewoman has said, this Government Reform

Committee, the full committee in the House, has only had four hearings

on Iraq contracting during this entire process.

In the other body, despite Senator Lautenberg's repeated requests,

the Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs over there

has not held a single hearing on this issue.

In the House Armed Services Committee, they have conducted oversight

hearings on some issues related to military operations and protecting

our troops, but they have not explored the issue of contracting since

it was touched upon in June of 2004. That is quite a contrast with the

original Truman Committee, which held 432 public hearings, 300

executive sessions, had 1,800 witnesses testify and issued 51 reports,

all the while saving the taxpayer $15 billion and saving countless

lives in the process.

The Truman Committee was unanimously respected for its focus on fact-

finding and its refusal to succumb to partisan consideration, and that

is what this commission would do as well. It is needed, because last

week a Federal jury found two employees of Custer Battles had cheated

the government on a contract to provide Iraq with new currency, and

some $10 million in damages.

In December the Boston Globe reported that the Congressional Research

Service put out a publication stating the Pentagon has not provided an

overall reckoning of these funds by mission or by military operation.

It went on to say that Congress has yet to receive a transparent

accounting of money that is allocated so far for the war.

Kellogg, Brown & Root's employees last summer pleaded guilty of

$100,000 in kick-backs, and it recently was reported that KBR did not

do its job under the contract with purification of water for our

troops, leaving them in a dangerous situation over there.

The General Accountability Office has purported to have found that

the Department of Defense officials and Interior officials charged with

overseeing the contract to provide interrogators at Abu Ghraib did not

fully carry out their roles. And in March of 2005, we learned that the

Pentagon auditors found that $212 million was paid to Kuwaiti and

Turkish subcontractors for fuel and that overcharging was charged back

by Halliburton.

We need this commission. It is the right thing to protect our troops

and the storm victims. The American public deserves open and

transparent government.