Mr. Chairman, I rise today to tell a tale of two

Republican disasters, the Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina. It is a story

with no best of times, only the worst of times. This tale is why I

oppose the Supplemental Appropriations Act (H.R. 4939).

The main characters in my story are an incompetent President and a

corrupt Congress. The setting is an America desperate for honest

leadership. But the plot involves lies and cover-ups. The problem is

misplaced priorities. But the solution is not this supplemental, which

provides another $67.6 billion for a failed war but only $19 billion to

help the victims of Katrina.

The first disaster, the Iraq War, was predicated on lies. Iraq had no

weapons of mass destruction, had never attempted to buy uranium from

Niger, and was not about to welcome American soldiers with open arms.

An incompetent President failed to prepare America for the postwar

period. As a result, looting of stores and museums began shortly after

the United States military gained control of Baghdad. Months later,

sectarian violence has pushed Iraq to civil war, with Shiite militia

and security forces clashing with Sunni citizens and insurgents.

Yet our troops remain in Iraq and in harm’s way. Two American soldiers

and 40 Iraqi soldiers and civilians are killed every day. As long as we

stay in Iraq, the insurgency will continue, even as the so-called Iraqi

democracy experiment goes nowhere. Three months after parliamentary

elections, the Iraqi parliament has yet to form a government.

Finally, large Republican donors including Halliburton have looted

the American treasury. Using their connections to secure no-bid

contracts for services in Iraq, these firms overcharge American

taxpayers and underserve our troops. All the while, Republicans' blind

allegiance to the President causes them to write blank checks, throwing

good money after bad at a war that is making America less secure.

The second disaster was the Republican response to Hurricane Katrina.

Several days before Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast, the President was

briefed on the severity of the storm and the likelihood levees would be

breached. But after failing to cut short his extended vacation to help

with the response, the President told ABC News and the American public

he was not advised the levees were likely to collapse.

After years of underfunding levee construction and maintenance,

Republicans attempted to shift the blame for the disaster and the

inadequate response onto state and local officials. But it was

President Bush who nominated unqualified campaign hacks to head FEMA

and congressional Republicans who rubber-stamped the appointment of

Michael Brown.

As a result of insufficient preparation and incompetent

administration, tens of thousands of hurricane victims went without

adequate food, water, and shelter in the storm's aftermath. Six months

after Katrina, relief workers are still finding bodies of victims.

In an attempt to atone for their sins, the Republicans have finally

brought forth additional legislation to help Katrina victims. But in a

pathetic and transparent attempt to prevent full debate on the

disastrous Iraq War, President Bush's Republican cronies in Congress

combined two supplementals into one.

Although I support additional funding for hurricane victims, I cannot

vote for a supplemental that appropriates 74 percent of its funds, or

$67.6 billion, to a misguided Iraq war on which we have already wasted

$350 billion--and the lives of 2,310 American soldiers and at least

37,000 Iraqi citizens.

It is time to tell a new tale, about bringing home our troops and

rebuilding homes for Katrina victims. Let's get this Iraq monkey off

our back and supplement housing rather than Halliburton.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill, and help me to tell a

new tale about American successes rather than Republicans disasters.