I thank the chairman for yielding.

Let me first of all say at the outset that I agree with Mr. Murtha.

We're not fighting this war. There's nobody in the Congress of the

United States that's paying more taxes to pay for this war. There's

nobody who's saving on metal to fight this war. There's nobody who's

saving on rubber to fight this war. There's nobody whose gasoline is

being rationed to fight this war. Our troops are fighting this war,

their families are fighting this war, but this Nation is not at war.

There is nobody in this Congress, not one of the 435 Members of this

Congress, who wants to lose this war. There is nobody in this House who

does not want to defeat al Qaeda. Nobody. Everybody wants to protect

this country. Nobody wants to lose another American. Everybody

understands that the fight against terrorism will require risks. But,

Mr. Speaker, this House deserves more than this game playing of

offering motions that we are then going to vote against. In effect,

this is a motion to reconsider the vote by which the previous bill was

adopted. It couldn't be made now, but that is effectively what it is.

And those who voted against that bill will vote against this motion.

The public needs to understand that a serious motion could have been

made here to change the policy, but that is not what was done. This is

an attempt to try to politically get people in a vote that is going to

be characterized as surrender.

Let me call my colleagues' attention to June 24, 1997. Our troops

were deployed in Bosnia stopping genocide, seeing a dictator arrested

and sent to The Hague and tried for genocide. He died before the trial

was over. But let me call your attention to that vote, because that

vote was about setting timelines. It was offered by Mr. Buyer, who is

now the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. Mr. Buyer

offered that motion and we debated it. I was opposed to it. We hadn't

lost a single troop in Bosnia, not one. We had spent a pittance

compared to what we have spent here. We have lost

10 percent of the troops we have lost in the last 120 days.

Bob Gates said this policy was failing. He's our Secretary of

Defense. Or let me put it this way: he didn't say that; he said we were

not winning. That's a different way of saying it more accurately. I'm

sorry.

But on June 24, 1997, that came to a vote about setting timelines on

an effort that was extraordinarily successful, brought peace to the

Balkans, or at least a lack of genocide, a lack of ethnic cleansing.

But Mr. Buyer said we need to come home. We weren't losing troops, it

wasn't costing us that much money, and we certainly were not losing.

On that timeline, Mr. Boehner voted ``yes,'' after 18 months in

Bosnia. Not 4 years, 4 years and 1 month. After 18 months, you wanted

to set a timeline. Mr. Boehner, your leader, voted ``yes.''

Mr. Blunt, your whip, voted ``yes.'' Mr. Hastert, your former

Speaker, voted ``yes.'' Mr. Hunter, the ranking member of the Armed

Services Committee, setting timelines, voted ``yes.'' Mr. Hyde, who was

then chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, voted ``yes.'' Mr.

Hoekstra, who spoke earlier tonight, voted ``yes'' on setting

timelines.

And yes, let me remind Mr. Lewis, you voted ``yes.'' You voted

``yes'' on a timeline where we had lost no troops, where we had stopped

genocide in its tracks, where we were not threatened with loss of life.

All we were threatened with was coming home and not keeping the peace,

keeping the stability, trying to make sure that we were successful.

I urge every one of my colleagues to vote ``yes'' on this Republican

motion. They don't mean it, but to reiterate to the American public

that we were serious, that we want to make sure, as Bob Gates has said

and been quoted by Mr. Obey and others, this was a useful effort for us

to make.

Why? Because what we want to do is make sure the Iraqis at least are

fighting this war, making sure that the Iraqis meet the criteria and

benchmarks set by whom? By President Bush, not by us. President George

Bush, the Commander in Chief, said they need to meet these benchmarks.

But if the message we send them is, we're there forever, why meet the

benchmarks? Why put their people at risk? If we're all prepared to

simply have our men and women at risk in lieu of Iraqi soldiers and

police at risk? Why indeed?

We need to expect accountability and participation by those whose

country it is. We deposed their dictator and declared some few months

later that our mission was accomplished. Unfortunately, because of the

flawed policies that were pursued, we have not yet succeeded.

I voted to give the President authority and I disagreed with the

gentleman from Pennsylvania when he said in November of 2005, let's get

out, not immediately, but consistent with the safety of our troops. But

I agree with the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Obey and the

overwhelming majority of the American public, some 70 percent, who say

it is time to let the Iraqis know that it is their fight, that we have

supported them, we will train them, we will protect our troops on the

ground, we will protect our diplomatic missions, and we will give them

assistance in arms, but this is their fight now. We are there to help

them, but it is their fight.

That's what this says, and it says 15 months from now, not tomorrow.

To characterize this as any kind of a surrender is not honest debate, I

suggest to you. Because if it is, then your June 24, 1997, which almost

all of you voted for, was a cry for surrender. I didn't believe it

then, don't believe it now. You had a difference of view as to what

would best resolve the situation in Bosnia. Now the issue is Iraq.

My colleagues on my side of the aisle, we took a position with which

the overwhelming majority of the American public agree. They are ahead

of us on this. Let us once again sustain that position. Nobody on this

side of the aisle was not being serious. Nobody on this side of the

aisle did not give this very serious, thoughtful, prayerful

consideration. And when you voted, you voted for America. When you

voted, you voted for our troops. When you voted, you voted for success

in our foreign policy and in our fight against terrorism.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle have offered a motion

which they are not for. They could have offered, I suggest, some

serious alternatives. They did not.

I urge my colleagues, vote ``yes,'' reaffirm the policy statement

that we need a new direction in Iraq. Staying the course has not

worked. Let's make a change. Vote ``yes.''