Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 9 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, this bill gives the President the exit strategy from the

Iraqi civil war that up until now he has not had.

Next Tuesday will be the fourth anniversary of the President's

``Mission Accomplished'' landing on that famous aircraft carrier. On

that date, U.S. troops had won the war in Iraq, but since that time the

administration's mismanagement, their misjudgments, and their missed

opportunities have entangled us in a quagmire that has become a

prolonged civil war. That civil war has gutted our influence in the

Middle East and much of the world. In the last 4 years, the

administration has spent over half a trillion dollars. It has stretched

the Army to the limit, brought our Guard and Reserve to the breaking

point, and reduced our military to the lowest state of military

readiness in modern history.

The President has refused to finance this war through the normal

appropriations process. He has chosen to mask the true cost of the war

by paying for it on the installment plan through a series of

supplemental requests. He has

now requested another supplemental of almost another $100 billion in

military spending, and almost $4 billion in other additional spending.

The bill before us today is our response.

We provide $4 billion more than the President asked for for troops in

the field. The President is objecting on two grounds. First, he does

not like the conditions we have placed on funding for the war. Second,

he objects to the money we have added for other crucial activities. He

calls it ``pork.'' So do some of the charter members of the ``Invent

Your Own Facts Club'' that seems to populate this institution.

We have provided $4 billion more than he has asked for for operation

and maintenance for personnel costs and for procurement.

We have provided $750 million more than he asked for for Afghanistan.

We have provided $2.2 billion more for military health to meet the

medical needs of our returning soldiers. We have added $1.8 billion for

veterans health care above the amount the President asked for.

We have provided $2.2 billion more for aviation security, port

security, and border security.

We have provided $80 million more for nuclear nonproliferation, and

we have added $150 million for the FBI.

We have provided $650 million more than the President asked for for

the pandemic flu emergency, cleaning up an action that last year's

Congress never got around to completing.

We have provided $3.3 billion more for Katrina, again cleaning up

some more business that last year's Congress failed to complete.

We have also provided $3.1 billion more for BRAC which the

administration itself asked for in its budget last year.

We provided $500 million for wild land fires, the same amount put

into the same account by the Republican majority 2 years ago for the

same purposes.

We have added $400 million to low income heating assistance because

the previous Congress cut that by $1 billion. We should have added back

the whole billion dollars, but in the interest of saving money we

confined it to $400 million.

We have added $425 million to continue the rural school payments in

the West that the last Congress never got around to renewing.

Unfortunately, they allowed that program to expire, as they allowed so

many other things to expire last year.

We have also provided $3.5 billion for agriculture disaster, again an

issue which has been hanging around for more than a year. The President

has declared more than 70 percent of the counties in this country to be

agriculture disaster areas. There ought to be some action that flows

from that unless we are taking the President's initial action to be

meaningless.

We have also provided $396 million in SCHIP to make certain that low

income children and low income families don't fall off the State health

care rolls. We have been asked to do that by bipartisan Governors from

14 States.

If the President wants to object to those items and call them pork,

or of members of the flat earth club in this body want to call it pork,

that's fine with me; I think the public will look at those issues

somewhat differently.

The President is attacking these additional items as a smoke screen

to obscure the fact that the key issue on this bill is whether or not

there will be a change in direction with respect to our policy in Iraq.

This bill supports the troops. It begins to hold Iraq and the

administration accountable, and it points the way to ending our

involvement in a protracted civil war.

As a condition of providing the President with the funds he has asked

for, we require that our American military units meet certain standards

that are known as the Murtha standards. They simply require that any

unit sent into battle be fully combat ready. They would require, as the

Defense Department already has for the most part, they would require

that any unit that has been in Iraq does not have to stay there for

more than a year without relief, and they also require that if they are

sent back, they get to spend at least a year at home before they go

back. And in an era where no one is being asked to sacrifice except

military families, it seems to me those are all minimum goals that we

all ought to be willing to adhere to.

Because the President rejected these requirements, we have given him

the right to waive these requirements, but only if he spells out to the

country why he has departed from them. That is imminently reasonable.

He owes the country that explanation.

We require that Iraq meet certain performance benchmarks, benchmarks

that were first laid out by the President himself, and we tie those

benchmarks to a timeline. If those benchmarks are met, redeployment of

U.S. troops must begin by July 1. If they are not met, they must begin

by October. Those dates are firm. The goal for completing such

redeployment is 6 months after it starts.

Now, the President objects to the fact that we are setting timelines,

but the Secretary of Defense himself was quoted in the Washington Post

as noting that these timelines, in fact, have helped give the Iraqis a

message that we are not going to stay in Iraq forever. We stand by

them. We believe these benchmarks and these timelines are necessary in

order to give General Petraeus the ability to make clear to the Iraqis

that we are not going to stay there forever, while they refuse to make

the political compromises necessary to end the civil war.

Iraqis and the President must understand our troops won the war. They

cannot achieve the political and diplomatic compromises that are needed

to end the civil war, only the Iraqis can do that.

Four years after ``mission accomplished'' is long enough, Mr.

Speaker. If the President were here I would simply say to him, ``Mr.

President, with this bill we have compromised on two fronts. We have

responded to your objection to the Murtha principles by giving you the

ability to waive them; all you have to do is explain why to the

country.'' We have responded to his concerns about those timelines by

adjusting them and making them somewhat more flexible in terms of their

completion.

So I would say to the President if he were here, ``Mr. President, it

is your turn; we need a new direction and we need it now. Please do not

say, as you said last week'' I will talk but I will not compromise.

``Mr. President, after 4 years, you need to change the direction. You

need to sign this bill.''

Mr. Speaker, I include for the Record the following tabular material

reflecting the funding levels in the conference report.