Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report

on H.R. 1591 and commend Chairman Obey for your efforts to protect our

troops, respect the wishes of the American people, and preserve our

Nation's interest in this bill.

Our troops have served with honor and courage. However, they should

be deployed only when battle ready and with a clear and achievable

mission. Neither is the case today in Iraq. Recent reports indicate the

troop surge is not working. The number of casualties rose again in

March, and this bloody trend continues.

We have heard from this administration that it is not willing to

negotiate on Iraq. Frankly, their unwillingness to compromise has led

us to this point, and the right of the American people to be heard is

nonnegotiable. No amount of American blood or treasure can help Iraq if

the Iraqis don't help themselves. The Maliki government must exhibit the political will to confront

extremists, to give all segments of society a stake in Iraq's future,

and to put Iraqi revenues towards the hard task of reconstruction. That

is why this bill asks the President to certify that the Iraqis are

doing their part in meeting critical benchmarks.

In addition, I am pleased the conference report includes nearly $200

million in increased funding for Afghanistan, $80.3 million for Jordan,

$45 million for Liberia, $769 million for Lebanon, much needed

assistance for Sudan and Somalia, increased funding for disaster and

refugee aid to Iraq, increased accountability through funding expanded

mandates for the special Inspector General and the State and USAID IG

operations.

While this bill provides most of the funding requested by the

President, it puts in place safeguards and oversight to stop waste,

fraud and abuse with U.S. taxpayer dollars in Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.