Mr. Speaker, I must again make the difficult decision to

vote ``present'' on the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and

Iraq Accountability Act.

I support the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

I can't in good conscience vote to fund President Bush's War in Iraq.

This senseless conflict has already taken the lives of more than 3300

American and tens of thousands of Iraqis. It has undermined the United

States' prestige in the world, led to the outbreak of a Shiite-Sunni

civil war, and cost us $379 billion. Those funds--and the tens of

billions of dollars for the war in today's legislation--would be better

spent on education, healthcare and other unmet domestic priorities.

Nor can I can vote, however, against a Democratic majority intent on

taking America's Iraq policy in a new direction. I applaud Speaker

Pelosi and the Democratic leadership for working toward the withdrawal

of American troops from Iraq. My Republican colleagues voting against

today's legislation are doing a disservice to both our troops and our

security by supporting an open-ended commitment in Iraq. I cannot join

their opposition to holding President Bush accountable.

My ``present'' vote is therefore an expression of strong opposition

to the war's continuation for even one more day and strong support for

the Democratic Congress' attempt to get an arrogant and stubborn

President to change course in Iraq.

I urge the President to reconsider both his threat to veto this bill

and his insistence on keeping our troops in harm's way. It is long past

time for Bush to end a war he should never have begun.