Mr. Speaker, we are back from our Fourth of July

district work period, but our homecoming has not been a particularly

happy one because we have received even more bad news from the

occupation in Iraq.

Yesterday the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service reported

that the cost of the occupation has soared to $10 billion a month,

which will add up to half a trillion dollars, thanks to the

administration's decision to send more troops and escalate the

occupation.

Ten billion dollars a month. I pulled out my calculator. I did some

division and found that $10 billion translates into $23 million per

month per congressional district. Yes, the President is sending a bill

to our constituents in every district every month that says you owe $24

million and you had better pay up because if you don't, I will borrow

the money and stick your children and your grandchildren with the bill

plus plenty of interest. And I am going to send you another bill just

like this one every single month from here on.

Now, some people call the spending on the war the ``burn rate.'' But

America doesn't have money to burn. Not when we have critically

important investments to make in places that really make a difference

for our country, like education; health care; the environment; energy

independence; and homeland security, including better security at our

ports, at our airports and giving first responders the tools they need

to keep our communities safe.

And here is what disturbs me the very most about this burn rate:

while the administration throws good money after bad in Iraq, it wants

to roll back health coverage for kids right here in America. Those are

the wrong priorities. They are the wrong values.

Let's ask ourselves what are we getting for our $10 billion a month.

We are getting an Iraq Government that isn't meeting any of the

benchmarks. We are contributing to a refugee crisis that has already

forced at least 4 million Iraqis out of their homes with tens of

thousands leaving every month. And we are stretching our military to

the breaking point.

Today, the Army announced that in June it missed its recruitment goal

for the second month in a row. It appears that parents, alarmed about

the bloodshed and never-ending nature of this occupation, are

discouraging their children from signing up. Isn't it ironic that our

involvement in Iraq is turning

out to be a bad recruiting tool for the United States but a great

recruiting tool for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups?

I am encouraged, however, that a growing number of my colleagues on

the other side of the aisle are turning against the occupation. But at

the same time, the President gave a speech today in Cleveland that

showed he isn't budging an inch from his failed escalation strategy. He

said that Congress for General Petraeus's report on the

surge in September before making any decision about Iraq, while

admitting at the same time that September is a meaningless goal. That

is outrageous. The American people didn't send us to Congress to sit

around and wait to do nothing. They sent us here to end the occupation,

and that is what we must do.

I have proposed a bill that would achieve that, H.R. 508. It would

fully fund bringing our troops home safely and soon. It would

accelerate international assistance for reconstruction and

reconciliation in order to keep Iraq as peaceful as possible. And it

would use diplomacy. It would use diplomacy, not war, to achieve

political solutions to regional problems.

We will have a golden opportunity in the days and weeks ahead to

chart a new course. I urge my colleagues to heed the call and listen to

history and listen to the American people and to bring our troops home.