Mr. Speaker, President Bush delivered a speech in

Cleveland yesterday in which he said that

That is what he said;

When I heard that remark, I thought to myself, I wonder what the

President would like us to do while we are waiting? Does he think we

should take up knitting? Should we empty out our committee rooms and

use them for ballroom dancing lessons? Should we have a sign on the

door of the House of Representatives that says,

The President's remark was, of course, outrageous. The American

people did not send us to Washington to wait and to do nothing. They

sent us here to take action, to end the occupation of Iraq, and that is

what we must do.

We cannot wait, because American troops continue to die. More than

600 have died since the troop surge began last winter.

We cannot wait, because at least 13,500 Iraqi civilians have died

since the escalation began, and that is according to very conservative

estimates.

We cannot wait, because the war is costing a staggering $10 billion

every single month, more than $60 billion since the escalation began.

We cannot wait, because the violence in Iraq is forcing tens of

thousands of new refugees to flee their homes every single month.

And we cannot wait, because the escalation has only escalated the

violence. April, May and June produced more American military deaths

than any other 3-month period since the war began in Iraq.

Instead of telling the Congress to wait, the administration should be

saying to the Iraqi government, stop waiting. Stop waiting, and start

working on the political solutions to Iraq's problems. Our troops have

done their part, but the Iraqi government has been either unwilling or

unable to do its part, and our leaders seem to refuse to hold them

accountable.

So we cannot allow the administration to sing that old tune,

because the American people have made it clear:

They want this occupation to end, and since the administration won't do

it, then Congress must.

The House will consider a troop redeployment bill this week. I

introduced a bill, H.R. 508, way back in January when the escalation

first began, to end the occupation. H.R. 508 calls for fully funding

the safe, orderly and responsible withdrawal and redeployment of our

troops within 6 months, and it guarantees full funding for the

healthcare needs of our veterans.

The bill also includes provisions to help the Iraqi people get back

on their feet, maintain stability and prevent a worsening of the civil

war. It would accelerate multinational assistance to Iraq for

reconstruction and reconciliation in that shattered land. And because

our involvement in Iraq has taught us that we must take a new approach

to foreign policy, my bill absolutely rejects preemptive war, which

clearly doesn't work. Instead, it calls for diplomatic efforts to help

Iraq and help its neighbors to achieve political, not military,

solutions to regional problems.

Mr. Speaker, the administration has abrogated its responsibilities,

and Congress has waited in the wings too long. Now it is time for us to

take the stage of history and put America on a new and better course.

It is past time to bring our troops home.