Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished Rules Chair.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to bring this debate to the floor of the

Congress. I oppose escalation of the war in Iraq that is being pushed

by President Bush and Vice President Cheney. Their intention to send

more young American men and women into what is largely a sectarian

civil war is more of the same ``stay the course'' mentality.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am

particularly concerned that the reckless Bush escalation will undermine

our country's readiness and ability to address other global threats to

our national security. Indeed, in recent testimony, the Marine

Commandant and the Army Chief of Staff testified that America will run

a strategic risk by implementing the escalation and staying on the same

course in Iraq. The generals confirmed that if our personnel and

equipment are tied up in Iraq, then our ability to handle future

threats and contingencies is reduced.

For example, in my State of Florida, the National Guard does not have

all of the equipment it needs to train and deploy soldiers. They are

only 28 percent equipped.

President Bush in essence confirmed that the escalation will harm our

Nation's readiness when he sent over his proposed 2008 budget last

week. He requested an additional $235 billion for this war. That is on

top of already $350 billion of taxpayer money. In effect, Bush's war in

Iraq is swallowing the defense budget and our country's ability to

prepare for any other threat to our national security.

The Bush plan also sacrifices health care for children and our

seniors and investments in our own towns and neighborhoods, while

continuing this war without end.

We will debate budgets and appropriations in the coming months, but

after 4 years of war, over 3,100 deaths of Americans, $350 billion, and

the Bush-Cheney failure to aggressively pursue a political solution, it

is important that we have this debate in the House of Representatives

this week. It is important for Members to go on record, and it is

important to demand a new direction on behalf of the American people.