Mr. Speaker, a recent CRS report shows that the

United States is now spending $10 billion a month fighting the war in

Iraq. That is over $2.5 billion a week. And what does the American

taxpayer get for this $10 billion a month? An army, nearly broken by

repeated deployments; a National Guard that is unwilling and unable to

respond to natural disasters or terrorist attacks at home because many

of our men and women are in Iraq and most of their equipment is; an

escalation in Iraq that has resulted in more death and little reduction

in violence; an Iraqi government that is unable to govern; Iraqi

Security Forces that refuse to fully stand up.

The war in Iraq costs every man, woman and child in New York's

Nineteenth District $3,077. For over $3,000 a person, the people of my

district have gotten a war that was a strategic mistake and has made

them less safe.

Today, the House of Representatives considered another bill for a

responsible withdrawal from the war in Iraq. The Responsible

Redeployment From Iraq Act requires U.S. troops to redeploy from Iraq

by April 1, 2008. After 4 years of repeated failure and little

accountability, the new Congress is working to repair the damage done

to our military and change the direction of this country.

When the President came to Congress to ask for additional funding for

the war in Iraq, I established a guiding principle for determining my

vote. Any legislation I voted for would have to contain a responsible

specific timeline to redeploy U.S. troops out of Iraq. Furthermore, the

bill would have to contain benchmarks that would hold the Iraqi

government accountable.

Following this principle, I voted four times in 5 months to provide

nearly $100 billion for extra military spending in Iraq and

Afghanistan, including extra money to improve our fight against al

Qaeda in Afghanistan. These bills also required the Iraqi parliament to

meet specific benchmarks to reduce violence and limit sectarian

violence. Further, they required the President to follow troop

readiness standards established by our own Pentagon. Unfortunately, the

President ignored the will of the American people and vetoed the first

bill that Congress sent him.

The President blindly insists that America continue down the same

path in Iraq. The President's path has left our troops in the middle of

Iraq's civil war, weakened U.S. national security, and is devastating

our military's ability to fight.

The President refuses to listen to his own State Department's report

showing that the Taliban is reemerging as a dominant force in

Afghanistan, dramatized by the most recent disheartening sight of young

girls being machine-gunned as they left their school, a tactic that is

used to try to intimidate parents into not sending their girls to

school.

Our men and women in uniform in both Iraq and Afghanistan have

performed bravely and worked to achieve every mission their leadership

has given them. Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq. But the

administration concedes that violence remains high; that the Iraqi

government has failed to meet the benchmarks endorsed by the President

in January; that political reconciliation is nonexistent.

Finally, after years of silence, even President Bush's allies have

realized that the current path in Iraq cannot be sustained. Senator

Domenici says

And Senator Lamar Alexander said,

It is time our troops had leadership worthy of their service,

leadership that will give them achievable missions that improve the

security of the American people.

That is why I supported the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act

that requires that the President publicly justify the number of troops

he needs to carry out post-redeployment missions such as protecting

embassy staff, force protection, and fighting international terrorist

organizations in Iraq. It is time the American people saw a change in

our course.

In the time it has taken me to give this speech, we have spent

another roughly $1 million in Iraq. $1 million for every 5 minutes we

spend in Iraq, for a war that has made us less safe and has weakened

our military.

It is time to change our course in Iraq and refocus on the threats in

Afghanistan, where the 9/11 attacks were planned and the al Qaeda and

the Taliban continue to plot. It is time we end our mistaken war in

Iraq.