Madam Speaker, I rise today, first of all, to pay tribute to

a true champion for peace and justice, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey. Her

leadership is reflected in the fact that today marks the 400th occasion

on which she has spoken on the House floor against the ongoing war in

Iraq and the war in Afghanistan.

Today is really a landmark not only because of Congresswoman

Woolsey's outstanding commitment to ending the wars we are engaged in,

but also because she is my good friend. And she will be retiring at the

end of this term. I was truly honored to be by her side when she

announced her retirement after 20 years of bold and visionary service

in this House and serving her district. It was a bittersweet occasion.

But I know she will do wonderful things in the next chapter of her

life.

Congresswoman Woolsey should really be commended for being an

unparalleled leader and a guiding light, a truly guiding light in

Congress for peace, for SMART Security, and for justice.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to thank Congresswoman Woolsey for

her unwavering leadership and commitment to end the unsustainable wars

in Iraq and Afghanistan. She introduced the very first resolution

calling for us to bring our young brave men and women home from Iraq. I

believe she pulled together then, what, 130 votes maybe for that

resolution? And I want to remind you, this was a time when this body

was, quite frankly, very timid in its opposition to the war.

She broke that silence, and I have to thank you for that very

historic moment, Congresswoman Woolsey. Now we must ensure that the

45,000 United States troops and our military contractors who remain in

Iraq leave Iraq at the end of this year, as stated in our Nation's

Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq.

Congresswoman Woolsey's fight to end these wars is directly tied to,

really, the impasse that we are facing over our Nation's debt limit,

which we are discussing today. She has tirelessly reminded this body,

time and time again, that in order to pay for these wars, the United

States has taken on incredible debt. This reckless spending and

resulting debt are now being used by many in a dangerous political game

which threatens the economic future of our country.

Allowing our government to default on this Nation's legal obligations

would threaten every American's economic security, it would devastate

people's retirement savings, and it would cripple an already struggling

housing market.

The truth is, and Congresswoman Woolsey always reminds us of this, is

that raising the debt ceiling should be really a very simple thing.

This should be a straightforward vote to allow the United States

Treasury to fund all of the programs and obligations of the entire

government that are already in the law, very simple.

Republicans in the House have already passed a $9 trillion increase

in the national debt. And now, instead of working to fund the programs

that they already voted to authorize, Republicans are playing a high-

stakes game of chicken with the safety and security of every single

American so that they can protect the massive tax breaks for the super

rich, Big Oil and, of course, hedge funds. They have taken an

incredibly irresponsible position that protecting tax breaks for the

super rich and Wall Street is more important than protecting the United

States Government and Main Street from defaulting on our debt.

And, again, Congresswoman Woolsey has been a leader in protecting

Social

Security, and I want to remind all of us today that Social Security and

Medicare did not create the national debt, and that is really

unconscionable to ask our most vulnerable communities to be the ones

who must bear the burden of balancing our budget.

It was the Republicans who told us that the financial markets would

regulate themselves. In return, what did we get? The financial crisis.

It's the Republican politicians who keep telling us that tax cuts pay

for themselves and create jobs. In return, we have a huge deficit and

an unacceptable unemployment rate. And it was Republicans who told us

that we could fight two wars while giving more tax breaks to their rich

friends.

Of course, Congresswoman Woolsey for years and years and years had

reminded us that, first of all, the wars did not need to be fought,

but, secondly, they were morally and fiscally wrong. In return, now we

will end up paying a cost of nearly $6 trillion by borrowing the money

and adding this to the tally of our Nation's debt.

Now, unfortunately, Republicans are blaming their debts on the most

vulnerable Americans. Even now they continue to drive our Nation closer

and closer to the brink of disaster just to protect massive tax breaks

for billionaires.

So once again, in closing, I am proud to stand here with

Congresswoman Woolsey as a member of the triad. She is working to end

our Nation's wars and will continue to do so to promote national

security and to protect our seniors and our children, our working

families and the most vulnerable Americans.

Thank you. We owe you, Congresswoman Woolsey, a debt of gratitude.