Mr. Speaker, an interim report last week by the White

House confirmed what most observers believe, that the situation in Iraq

is not improving. The Iraqi Government has failed to meet the political

benchmarks endorsed by the President last January. The Iraqi security

forces continue to perform below expected levels. But the President

continues to ask us stubbornly to stay the course.

At the same time, U.S. troops are overextended, many having served

multiple tours in Iraq. This is unfair to our soldiers, their families,

and dangerous for our national security. As Major General John Batiste

recently noted,

It is in America's best interest to rethink our national

strategy, deliberately disengage from Iraq, refit and rearm the

military, get serious about homeland security, and prepare to win the

next phase of the struggle.

Last week this House voted to do exactly that. This Democratic House

joins with the American people and our retired generals in demanding a

new direction in Iraq. This week the Senate can join us by supporting

the Levin-Reed amendment.