Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No matter what you call it, another escalation in the war in Iraq is

wrong. I will oppose in both word and deed any effort to send more

troops. We've tried it before. It will not just mean more American

casualties. It will bring more violence to the Iraqis while adding to

the burden on our already strained Armed Forces. We should start

instead bringing our troops home, not sending more into harm's way in

what the President's advisers have already admitted is a political

decision, not a strategic one. Let's take advantage of the new

congressional leadership to change direction in what Americans know is

our most important issue, ending the war in Iraq.

We should start with the resolution the Bush administration used to

authorize this disaster. Knowing what we know now, the authorization of

force bears little relation to reality. Instead, the committees of

jurisdiction should use their upcoming hearings to craft new

legislation that will mean a withdrawal of our troops as well as guide

our continued involvement in Iraq until that withdrawal is complete. I

will introduce legislation later this month that would provide exactly

that sort of guide by refocusing our efforts on political, diplomatic

and economic strategies.

Most importantly and most immediately, Congress has clear authority

through its power of the purse. We must demand accountability for how

money is spent, who is getting how much and for what purpose. We need

to target war profiteering. There are too many accounts of contractors

who have taken taxpayer dollars and abandoned our troops under fire and

the Iraqi people in need. We need an entity like the Truman Commission

during World War II to aggressively investigate contractors, punish war

profiteers and recover misspent funds by canceling any failed or

fraudulent contracts. By redirecting as much of the money as possible

to projects run for and by Iraqis, we can repair that damaged country

as cost effectively as possible.

We must also reconsider the unprecedented privatization of our

military effort. The outsourcing of these basic support functions in

Iraq has left contractors unaccountable to the American people, immune

from military law and has cost the taxpayers much more than we've

needed to spend.

While we're at it, Congress should end the outsourcing of our work.

It should be embarrassing to the Republican leadership that it took the

Iraqi Study Group to provide the oversight and accountability that

Congress should have done these past 4 years.

We need to work to make sure the political discussion surrounding

Iraq is not just more civil but more effective. We need to make it

possible to debate this issue in terms of facts and the policy

consequences and not hide behind the cloud of politics. In the 2002,

2004 and 2006 election cycles, there was lots of talk about Iraq, but

people didn't tell the truth. Instead, the issue was manipulated for

political purposes. We must resist the efforts to reduce this

discussion to how it will impact the next election rather than how we

got into this mess and how we are going to get out of it. In all of

this conversation, we need to be dealing with the long-term security of

the United States.

We must look at the President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq in

the context of those violent fundamentalists around the world that

would do us harm, threats of genocide in Darfur and chaos in Somalia,

nuclear proliferation, global warming and the loss of America's

influence in the world. In none of those areas does escalating the war

in Iraq make the world a safer place.

The American people would welcome Congress doing our job right. Only

then can we turn this disaster around and provide the security for

families in America and around the world.

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