Mr. Speaker, last week something very

disturbing occurred. President Bush had an opportunity to demonstrate

that he understood the country's concern, he had a chance to finally

articulate a clear plan for our country's engagement in Iraq. But,

instead, the President chose to escalate our involvement in Iraq's

civil war by proposing a substantial increase in the number of American

troops there, about half of whom are based in Georgia.

Mr. Speaker, our troops have performed with great courage. They have

performed admirably in the Congress, and the American people will

continue to support them and provide them with every resource that they

need. But we need better leadership coming from the President and his

War Cabinet. This new Democratic Congress is not going to give the

President a blank check, and we will continue to demand answers to the

tough questions that have not been answered.

Rather than escalating our involvement in Iraq, I believe that any

plan should focus on shifting responsibility to the Iraqis so that we

can begin a phased redeployment. The American people want change, of

course, in Iraq, and House Democrats intend to keep pressing the

President to provide it.