Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I joined with my good

friends, distinguished colleagues and fellow Californians,

Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Congresswoman Maxine Waters, in

introducing landmark legislation that would bring our troops home from

Iraq within a 6-month time frame.

The Bring Our Troops Home and Sovereignty of Iraq Restoration Act is

the first comprehensive legislative proposal to end the military

occupation and provide a framework to help bring stability back to

Iraq.

One week ago, when he addressed the Nation, President Bush

demonstrated to the world that he continues to remain blind to the

realities on the ground in Iraq. Instead of putting forth a plan that

will withdraw our troops, the President is increasing our military

presence, escalating the number of troops by over 20,000. What

President Bush fails to grasp is that our military presence is only

fueling the insurgency, plunging Iraq further into chaos and civil war.

Mr. Speaker, the November elections showed just exactly how fed up

Americans are with the President's failed Iraq policy. It is time now

to honor that mandate. It is now up to the Congress to catch up with

the will of the people.

During his weekly radio address on Saturday, President Bush

challenged those of us who disagree with him to offer a plan of our

own. Today, we have taken up his challenge.

The Congress has already appropriated funding that will support our

troops and keep this occupation going for at least another 6 months,

possibly longer. That funding, instead, should be used to finance an

aggressive withdrawal plan that brings our troops home to their

families; and our bill would do exactly that.

Our plan will also withdraw all U.S. troops and military contractors

from Iraq within 6 months from date of enactment.

It will prohibit any further funding to deploy or continue to deploy

U.S. troops in Iraq. The bill does, however, allow for funding to be

used as needed to ensure safe withdrawal of all U.S. military personnel

and contractors. Funding may also be used for the increased training

and equipping of Iraqi and international security forces.

Thirdly, it accelerates during the 6-month transition training of a

permanent Iraqi security force.

And fourth, it authorizes, if requested by the Iraqi government, U.S.

support for an international stabilization force. Such a force could be

funded for no longer than 2 years and be combined with economic and

humanitarian assistance.

It guarantees full health care funding, including mental health for

U.S. veterans and military operations in Iraq and other conflicts.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the bill would rescind the 2002

congressional authorization for the war in Iraq, prohibit the

construction of permanent U.S. military bases in the country, and

finally, ensure that the U.S. has no long-term control over Iraqi oil.

We believe that the oil in Iraq belongs to the Iraqi people, and we

believe that when this oil goes into the world marketplace, the

international marketplace, the U.S. will certainly have access to our

share.

Mr. Speaker, excluding the veterans' benefits, our plan will cost the

American people pennies on the dollar compared to continuing the

occupation of 2 more years in Iraq. It will save lives, bodies and

minds, and it will give Iraq back to the Iraqis.

The Bring Our Troops Home and Sovereignty of Iraq Act is an important

step in regaining our country's credibility in the region and

throughout the world, and it provides the President and Congress with a

comprehensive strategy for responding to the majority of Americans who

want our troops to come home.