Mr. Speaker, yesterday, millions of Iraqis went out and

voted for a new, national parliament, and I applaud them for doing so.

I also commend the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces, who helped

the Iraqi people vote in safety. Our troops are doing a difficult job

in Iraq.

I do not favor immediate withdrawal. Opposition to immediate

withdrawal is not a substitute for a clear and detailed American

strategy in Iraq, nor is blindly staying the course. What is needed is

coming to terms with what the course should be--a plan regarding

completion of our presence in Iraq.

Last month, the Senate adopted an amendment to the Defense bill that

requires the President to submit such a plan to Congress, an amendment

I strongly support. Indeed, I favor the more rigorous version of the

amendment that was offered in the other body. In addition to requiring

the Administration to provide Congress with a detailed strategy in Iraq

with measurable benchmarks, the Administration would also provide

Congress with estimated dates for the phased redeployment of U.S.

forces from Iraq as each condition is met.

Unfortunately, the resolution before the House is transparently

political. The House should reject it.