Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 12 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, why are we here? We are here because 4 years ago the

President plunged us into a preemptive war in Iraq, a country that had

not attacked the United States, and we took that action on the basis of

bad information, manipulated intelligence, with no visible plans for

governing after the war was over.

Mr. Speaker, that attack diverted us from the hunt for bin Laden, the

person who did attack us.

The war has now gone on for 4 years and, as a result, we have seen

chaos and carnage. We have seen over 3,000 American service men and

women die, many times more wounded and maimed. We have seen our

influence decimated throughout the Middle East. We have seen our

reputation as the democratic hope of the world tarnished by stories

about torture and rendition.

I voted against that war. There were 215 Republicans who voted for it

and 6 that voted against it. There were 81 Democrats who voted for it

and 126 Democrats who voted against it. We had 132 votes, in total,

against going to war. And ever since that time, we have been trying to

get to 218 votes so we can turn this country and this war around.

Over the last 4 years, this war has been fought with virtually no

sense of shared sacrifice. Military families have done double and

triple duty, while the rest of America has had to accept the sacrifice

of a tax cut. That is about all that has been asked of most Americans.

We have spent a huge amount of our national treasure, and now the

President is asking for another almost $100 billion for this war and

asking for an additional $3.5 billion for his own domestic priorities.

This bill is our response. It says to the President: ``Okay, you can

have that money, but only under certain terms and conditions.'' And we

try to do three things: number one, to redirect a greater effort to the

right war in Afghanistan, rather than the wrong war in Iraq. Secondly,

we try to protect our troops to the maximum extent possible and correct

the neglect that they have suffered as they have returned from the

battlefield. And, thirdly, we are trying to send a message to Iraq

politicians that they need to change direction; that we will no longer

tolerate an open-ended, interminable babysitting job; that they must

get together and begin to resolve their own differences.

This bill sets a timetable for repositioning our troops out of Iraq.

The exact timetable will be determined by the performance of the Iraqis

and whether or not they meet important political and military

benchmarks.

And this bill establishes a target for finishing our redeployment in

any circumstance. It recognizes that our troops won the war, but it

also recognizes that the President's plan calls upon troops to do

something that they do not have the power to do, namely, to convince

Iraqi factions to reach reasonable compromises on their own turf.

It sets reasonable conditions for moving our troops into a different

posture. It holds Iraqis accountable to standards that the President

himself has laid out. And it puts us on a new direction with respect to

the war in Iraq.

And it does some other things, too. It completes action on a number

of leftover pieces of business that the previous Congress left to this

new incoming Congress.

The President himself asked for $3.4 billion to deal with the needs

of FEMA. We are also finishing action on the BRAC action which requires

$3.1 billion in additional funding. We are finishing action on the need

to improve family military housing to the tune of $3.4 billion. We are

finishing action on rebuilding the lives and providing other assistance

to the Katrina victims after the most devastating natural disaster in

the history of our country.

We are finishing the action on the agriculture disaster problem that

Congress wrestled with for well over a year in the previous Congress

without coming to resolution. And we are providing the final $1 billion

in funds to combat a potential pandemic flu, funds which the President

himself requested in an emergency appropriation in the year 2005.

And we are also finishing action on the action begun last year by the

Congress in trying to deal with the fact that 14 States are going to

run out of child health money; and we need, therefore, to provide $750

million to see to it that low-income families and children in low-

income families are not pushed off those State health care rolls. This

is a request that has come in from Republican and Democratic Governors

alike.

And we have also provided some additional funding, above what the

President asked for, items which are not

last year's business, but which we think are important in terms of this

year's business.

We are increasing funding for veterans health and defense health by

$3.4 billion. We are, on the homeland security front, increasing

funding substantially. The President, since days after 9/11, has been

resisting virtually every congressional effort to add funding for

homeland security, for border security, for cargo security and the

like.

We are continuing the effort to provide significantly more money than

the President has asked for. If anybody wants to argue with that, I

would suggest they take it up with the 9/11 Commission. I would suggest

they take it up with the Hart-Rudman Commission. I would suggest they

take it up with the 9/11 families. Everybody but Anne Coulter, I think,

would be responsive to what those families think.

And then we are also providing $1.2 billion in additional funding for

our war in Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, I sat at CIA headquarters and

watched, right after 9/11, as our predator aircraft were searching

Afghanistan for bin Laden. And I know what the people at that agency

were saying when they expressed their frustration that the President

was diverting a huge share of our resources in the hunt for bin Laden

to prepare for the unilateral attack on Iraq.

What this bill is trying to do is to correct that by, again,

refocusing additional attention on the war against Afghanistan. And I

make absolutely no apology for the funds that we have in here.

Now, some will say this is not a perfect instrument. They will differ

with the time line that we have for the repositioning of troops, and

they will differ with the benchmarks. But what I would say to them is

that what is important in this document today is not the exact wording.

What is important is not the exact timetable. What is important is not

the exact enumeration of benchmarks. What is important is that, for the

first time, this Congress will be exercising its constitutional

responsibilities to provide real oversight on the executive branch of

government, and we will be trying to set this country on a new

direction.

Someone in this House said last week that we are similar in our

position to a board of directors for a corporation. He said the

President is the CEO. The President's Cabinet represents his management

team, and we are the board of directors. And when a board of directors

of a corporation sees that the management of the corporation is leading

it down a disastrous path, it has a fiduciary responsibility to its

stockholders to step in and correct the problem. That is what we are

trying to do in this legislation. In this case, we have a fiduciary

responsibility and a representational responsibility to the taxpayers

and to our constituents, and we are trying to meet that responsibility

today.

Now, there are some who have criticized us for doing so, some in

newspapers and some on this floor. Very frankly, I am getting a bit

tired of those who were consistently wrong from the beginning on the

issue of Iraq, I am getting tired of them lecturing those of us who

were consistently right from the beginning in our opposition to this

war.

And when people ask me why we don't have a better solution, I tell

them of the old story about Eddie Stanky, who used to play second base

for the New York Giants many years ago. And one day, Leo Durocher, the

manager, was hitting ground balls to the infield, and Stanky dropped

two in a row. And so Durocher grabbed a glove and said, ``Here, kid,

I'm going to show you how it's done.'' And he went out to second base,

and the very first ball Durocher dropped. And he turned to Stanky, and

said, ``Kid, you got second base so screwed up, nobody can play it.''

The fact is, if you substitute George Bush for Eddie Stanky and Iraq

for second base, you have got the picture of what the problem is today.

Now, this Congress cannot run foreign policy, but it has an

obligation to try to influence the policy and influence the conduct of

that policy when we see it headed down the wrong path. Mr. Murtha has

tried to lead the way in seeing to it that we face up to those

responsibilities, and this legislation will give us an opportunity to

do that.

I would hope it would be supported on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

The gentleman talks about how we need to support General Petraeus.

Let me quote from Thomas Friedman, who has had years of experience in

understanding the Middle East. He said: I hope the Democrats under

Speaker Nancy Pelosi keep pushing to set a deadline for withdrawal

from Iraq because they are providing two patriotic services that the

Republicans failed to offer in the previous 4 years. The first is

policy discipline. The other useful function Speaker Pelosi and her

colleagues are performing is to give the President and General David

Petraeus, our Commander in Iraq, the leverage of a deadline without a

formal deadline. How so? The surge cannot work without political

reconciliation among Iraqi factions, which means Sunni-Shiite

negotiations, and such negotiations are unlikely to work without

America having the leverage of telling the parties that if they do not

compromise, we will leave. Deadlines matter. At some point Iraqis have

to figure this out themselves. Since Mr. Bush refuses to set a

deadline, Speaker Pelosi is the next best thing. Do not underestimate

how useful it is for General Petraeus to be.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman can have charts, but the charts don't

change facts. I would also observe that the important thing is not what

happened 7 or 8 years ago. The important thing is what we are going to

do today and tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 1/2 minutes to the gentleman from

Pennsylvania.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds. Again, we can

debate yesterday until the cows come home. What Mr. Murtha and I are

trying to focus on is what we do in this bill today to make tomorrow

better for our servicemen and our country. That is the issue, and that

is the issue that this bill tries to address.

I yield myself 1 minute.

I would say to the gentleman who just spoke, for the last 4 years we

have tried it your way. For the last 4 years we have had a Congress

that did whatever George Bush wanted it to do, rubber-stamp, lock-step

all the way.

Today is different. Today we have a Congress that is responding to

what the public asked for in the last election. What you are seeing

today is the new world of checks and balances. Get used to it. It is

what the public asked for, and it is what they are going to get out of

this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I demand the gentleman's words be taken down.

The gentleman referred to us as producing ``bribe-as-you-

go'' legislation.

Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, let me simply

congratulate the gentleman for withdrawing those words.