Mr. Speaker, there are legitimate and important emergency

funding needs for the troops and our Federal civilian corps on the

ground in Iraq and elsewhere. The President requested $93.4 billion in

emergency supplemental appropriations to continue the fight against

terrorism, and that is what we should be doing.

Unfortunately, this bill offers, I think, a way of not doing that in

an appropriate way. It is bloated with $124.3 billion in spending, $21

billion over what was requested. It is true we have provided funding

for emergency supplementals before, but it would be hard pressed to

convince the American people that $25 million for spinach producers,

which may be important to do, but in the regular order; $74 million for

peanut storage may be appropriate, but in regular order. It should not

be done here. At the same time it does that, it restricts the civilian

spending for the provincial reconstruction teams, which helps us do

some of the civilian things that we should be doing in Iraq.

The larger issue, however, is this legislation before us has become a

vehicle, unfortunately, for polarization on the fight to stabilize

Iraq. I have been there three times. I believe tying the hands of our

military commanders to adapt to the changing circumstances can only

hurt our mission and our troops.

I don't believe it is a good policy to criticize the administration's

strategy as failing, while at the same time cutting the very funding

necessary for the administration and the troops to succeed, and then

putting conditions on releasing the funding provided. They just don't

all fit together.

We have to look no further than the report of the bipartisan Iraq

Study Group to find ``the way forward, a new approach for Iraq.'' Just

last months when we debated the Iraq war resolution, 106 Members from

both sides of the aisle mentioned the importance of the Iraq Study

Group and how they supported it.

Last night Mr. Shays asked the Rules Committee to make in order an

amendment that I was cosponsoring to do exactly that, and it was turned

down, and just at the very time the diplomatic engagement that most of

us wanted to see take place begins to take place. The meeting 2 weeks

ago had us engaging with the Syrians and the Iranians. We accepted Mr.

Moran's amendment in the full committee, which was good, to really put

the Congress on record in support of that diplomatic effort. But Mr.

Shays was turned down again, as I was turned down several weeks ago.

The Iraq Study Group's Cochairmen Baker and Hamilton said in the

group report, ``The U.S. foreign policy is doomed to failure, as is any

course in action in Iraq, if not supported by a broad, sustained

consensus.''

This bill is not a broad, sustained consensus. The recommendation of

the Iraq Study Group could have brought us, and still may very well

bring us, to a consensus that unites the Congress and the nation on

Iraq. That is the policy both the Congress and the administration

should embrace. This bill does not do it, and I urge a ``no'' vote on

it.

There are some legitimate and important emergency funding needs for

our troops and our Federal civilian corps on the ground in Iraq and

elsewhere. The President requested some $93.4 billion in emergency

supplemental appropriations to continue the fight against terrorism.

That's what this bill should be addressing.

Unfortunately, this bill fails to offer a reasonable way forward in

supporting our troops, and I cannot vote for it.

This is a bloated $124.3 billion spending bill--over $21 billion than

what was requested.

It's true we've provided funding for emergencies in other

supplementals, for example hurricane relief and planning for a flu

pandemic. But I think we would be hard pressed to convince the people

we represent that $25 million for spinach producers or $74 million for

peanut storage costs qualify as emergency spending needed today. The

debate on that kind of spending should be part of the fiscal year 2008

appropriations process where it belongs.

The larger issue, however, is that this legislation before us has

become the vehicle for polarization on the fight to stabilize Iraq. It

does not offer an alternative. Instead, it would ultimately mandate a

retreat.

I have been to Iraq three times, and my concern for our troops has

never been stronger. If I thought that this bill was in their best

interests, I would support it.

Tying the hands of our military commanders to adapt to changing

circumstances can only hurt our mission and our troops.

Within the State-Foreign Operations portion, it cuts funding

necessary to support projects such as the Provincial Reconstruction

Teams. PRTs are joint civilian-military teams living in the provinces

among the Iraqi people. They work side-by-side with the Iraqis to

identify development and governance programs and offer our best bet for

improving stability and governance.

Cutting funding for these teams is cutting them off at their knees

before they get a chance to stand up. These funds are essential for

improving safety and stability--the very safety and stability which

will enable our troops to withdraw more quickly.

I just don't believe it is good policy to criticize the

administration's strategy as failing while at the same time cutting the

very funding necessary for it to succeed and then putting conditions on

releasing funds provided.

We have to look no further than the report of the bipartisan Iraq

Study Group to find ``the way forward--a new approach'' for Iraq. They

worked for more than 8 months, supported by expert working groups and

senior military advisers in the areas of economy and reconstruction,

military and security, political development, and strategic

environment.

The study group's report released last December 6 was hailed as an

important opportunity to chart a new course for Iraq. That is what we

should be considering today.

Just last month when we debated the Iraq war resolution, 106 Members

from both sides of the aisle mentioned the importance of the Iraq Study

Group's recommendations as the way forward in Iraq.

Last night, Mr. Shays asked the Rules Committee to make in order an

amendment, offered in partnership with me, to support the findings of

the Iraq Study Group. By doing so, we believed the House would be

working to meet our responsibility as political leaders to build

bipartisan consensus on the issues of war and peace.

But his request was turned down. That was the second time in a month

that the Rules Committee has not allowed an amendment on the Iraq Study

Group's report. Instead, we have before us a political statement that

pulls us farther apart.

The ramifications of this polarization reach far beyond Washington;

all the way to Baghdad and the Iraqi provinces. I want to read from the

letter Secretary Baker and Congressman Hamilton wrote as the prelude to

the Iraq Study Group's recommendations:

And it goes on to say:

The bill before us does not move the country toward a consensus. The

country must come back together. We must be united. That is the only

way we will be successful.

The recommendations of this distinguished group could have brought us

to consensus and united the Congress and the Nation on Iraq. That is

the policy both the Congress and the President should embrace.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill.