Mr. Speaker, this week Congress takes up its obligation

to finally change course in Iraq. This week as we enter the fifth year

of the Iraq war, more than 3,200 American lives have been lost, tens of

thousands more are wounded, and sectarian violence threatens to spill

over into the entire Middle East with no prospect for a stable,

constitutional democracy in Iraq in sight. We must judge this war not

for what we wish it were, but for what it has so clearly and tragically

become, a mistake of historic proportions.

I believe America should be sending a clear signal by beginning to

reduce our troop levels now so the Iraqi Government takes

responsibility and diplomacy can begin for real. I support phased

redeployment over the next year and will seek every opportunity to

mandate such change in law. Let us serve our men and women fighting

overseas and recognize their sacrifices by charting a new course in

Iraq.

By voting for this supplemental appropriations bill, we vote for

accountability in Iraq. We vote to force a change in policy and in law,

requiring a phased, responsible redeployment of our troops over 12 to

18 months. There are too many lives at stake here, and, personally, I

have crossed the Rubicon on this war.

Regardless of whether this bill is blocked by a filibuster from

Senate Republicans or a threatened veto from President Bush, we must

support this bill today. Passing this bill in the House will be the

first formal act, the first step toward requiring a new course in Iraq.

We all know our troops will do anything their country asks. But let us

make sure their courage and their sacrifices advance a mission that

enhances our security and our interests.

We need to begin reducing our troops and pursuing a new strategy in

order to achieve a stable Iraq, a peaceful Middle East, and a more

secure America.

That is our obligation. Let us honor it by voting in favor of this

supplemental bill.