Mr. Speaker, the American people have paid a tremendous

price for our 5-year occupation of Iraq. Over 3,100 U.S. lives have

been lost and more than 23,000 wounded, and nearly half a trillion

taxpayer dollars have been spent. In my own congressional district,

nine service members have given their lives to the conflict in Iraq.

I am committed to bringing our troops home safely and as soon as

possible. The legislation before us today holds the Iraqi government

accountable by imposing strict benchmarks for success. If the President

cannot show that the Iraqis have met these standards by July 1, 2007, a

troop withdrawal will begin immediately and must be completed within

180 days.

These measures not only provide the support our troops need and

deserve, but they also force this President to think twice before

asking our brave military men and women to serve a third or fourth tour

in Iraq, and requires and provides the resources our troops need when

they come home.

But this bill also honors our veterans by investing billions of

additional dollars for their health care. And, for the first time since

this war began, Congress is not giving the President a blank check.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we can bring a reasonable, timely end to the

war in Iraq, and if this bill does that, we will also protect our

troops.

I urge my colleagues to cast their important vote for this bill.