Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman very much for

yielding me this time.

As we work to craft this legislation and build consensus, Americans

read headlines that said something like: ``Democrats divided, Democrats

in disarray.'' But the truth is we were being deliberative.

We spent weeks listening to the diverse members of our caucus,

folding their input into this bill, and I am confident we have produced

a strong and pivotal piece of legislation because we drew from the

broad spectrum of all of our Members. We are a diverse caucus and our

diverse experiences and backgrounds reflect the priorities and

perspectives of all Americans. I am proud of our caucus and this

legislation we have produced.

We all seek to heal our Nation by ending the Iraq war. For the first

time in 4 years, almost to the date, we have an opportunity to vote for

binding legislation that changes the course in the Iraq war. This

legislation ensures that the United States forces in the field have all

the resources that they require, directs more resources to the war

against al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, improves health care

for returning service members and veterans. But most of all, it sets

benchmarks and time lines for ending our participation in Iraq.

We all seek to heal our brothers and sisters in the gulf coast who

have been struggling for 18 months against the solid indifference of

this administration. The emergency supplemental bill waives the 25

percent match required by the Stafford Act so that the victims of

Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma can get the service they deserve.

This supplemental is also good medicine for the children in 14 States

who have lost their health care. It contains $750 million to fix that

problem.

This bill also is good tonic for our veterans and active military who

in many instances are suffering as much from broken promises as they

are from broken limbs.

This legislation includes money to fix Walter Reed Hospital, gives

better military health to our military men, improves veteran housing,

and I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I do not quarrel with those people who

see this as a vote of conscience. I believe it is unconscionable to

ignore children without health care. It is unconscionable to leave

survivors of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma without disaster

assistance. It is unconscionable to ask our soldiers to fight a war and

not provide them adequate training and equipment, and I sincerely

believe it is unconscionable to allow this open-ended war to continue,

when with this bill, we can begin its ending.