Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq is a disaster. We are

engaged in a war that should never have been fought and that was

presented to the American people and this Congress over 4 years ago

wrapped in falsehoods and mendacity. Our military is being drained of

personnel and materiel in an occupation that, we were told, would never

occur because we would be greeted as liberators.

To say that the President's prosecution of this war has been

mismanaged misses the much more important point that President Bush

exercised extraordinarily poor judgment in initiating an unnecessary

war of choice. Our soldiers, their families, and indeed the entire

country, now bears the legacy of the President's headstrong rush into

this quagmire.

The President, with the Iraq War supplemental appropriations request,

has again asked the Congress to give him a blank check to continue an

endless and bottomless war. But that is not what the President will get

with this bill. Instead of a blank check, the Congress is providing a

much needed check and balance to the Executive Branch.

The bill before us today requires the President to certify to the

Congress that certain tough benchmarks have been met. If he cannot so

certify, an immediate redeployment of U.S. forces must commence. Under

the bill, by July 1, 2007, the President must certify that Iraq has met

political and military benchmarks, including the implementation of a

program to disarm the militias. By October 1, 2007, the President must

make another certification of Iraq's progress, including that militia

control of local security has been eliminated. And even if the

President is able to make both certifications to Congress, this bill

requires that U.S. forces begin withdrawing from Iraq by March 1, 2008

and complete that withdrawal no later than by the end of August 2008.

These limitations on the President are important, as they will pave

the way for the United States to finally withdraw from Iraq.

This bill also prohibits permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq, which

is an essential precondition for the reestablishment of public trust in

the United States within the Middle East and especially Iraq.

Particularly significant to me is a prohibition included in this bill

which bars the use of funds from this supplemental in contravention of

the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman

or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. I have had to fight to include

this provision in previous appropriations bills under the Republican

Congress and I would like to thank and commend Chairman Murtha for his

leadership and courage on this issue. In this bill, my restriction on

the use of funds for torture also includes a specific ban on the use of

funds to carry out renditions, which the President has used to transfer

detainees for interrogation or other purposes to countries known for

the use of torture.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to see the war continue another day. I want

our troops home immediately, and I am frustrated beyond words by the

President's continued intransigence in the face of overwhelming

evidence and opinion. The bill that this House is debating today will

take us closer to the moment when every American soldier, sailor,

airman or Marine in Iraq can be brought home.

I urge adoption of the bill.