Mr. Speaker, the stay-the-course strategy in Iraq has

failed. The war in Iraq is entering its fifth year, longer than U.S.

involvement in World War I and World War II. It is time to stop the

open-ended commitment there. It is time for the Government of Iraq to

take responsibility for their own security. It is time to start the

process of bringing our troops home. It is time to refocus our military

efforts to combat terrorism. It is time to send a clear message that

Congress will no longer provide a blank check to fund this war. It is

time to pass the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq

Accountability Act.

Supporting this bill supports the troops before, during, and after

they are deployed. This bill enforces the Department of Defense's

current standards for military readiness and provides $2.5 billion in

additional funding to ensure that our troops are properly equipped and

trained; it provides $1.7 billion in additional funding for health care

for our troops, and another $1.7 billion to ensure our veterans receive

the care they need and that they deserve. We must support our troops in

the theater and when they come home.

This bill is tough on terrorism, tougher than the President's current

plan that pays little attention to the war in Afghanistan. It adds $1

billion to the Department of Defense efforts there. We have lost our

focus in the war on terror. We must redirect our military efforts on

thwarting terrorism in Afghanistan and eliminating al Qaeda. This bill

does that.

The current strategy has not worked largely because the Iraqi

leadership has no real motivation to make it work. This bill holds both

the President and the Iraqi Government accountable by ensuring that

real progress is made. It is time to turn over the control of Iraq to

their people.

Our troops have done their part, and they have done it magnificently.

The American people have done their part as well by giving us their

sons and daughters who ousted Saddam Hussein. With the cost of this war

approaching one-half trillion dollars, it is time for the people of

Iraq to spend their dollars, supply their troops, and setting their

differences. The destiny of Iraq is now in Iraqi hands.