Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the House will vote on legislation

to set a path for the responsible redeployment of American troops from

Iraq. I will support this bill because it will end American involvement

in the Iraqi civil war and bring our troops safely home.

This week marks the fourth anniversary of a war born in deceit and

prolonged by mismanagement. I voted against the invasion in 2002; I

will vote now to end this war by supporting the Iraq Accountability Act

with its benchmarks and timetables for redeploying U.S. forces from

Iraq.

For 4 years, previous Congresses neglected their oversight

responsibilities while the administration made mistake after mistake.

The congressional majority failed to conduct thorough investigations,

demand accountability, or offer policy alternatives. We have paid a

steep price for that neglect, including the lives of more than 3,200

American Armed Forces, with another 24,000 wounded, many critically.

The new Congress is providing long overdue leadership, taking action

to end U.S. involvement in a civil war with no end in sight.

Responsible military disengagement from Iraq is in the national

security interests of the United States. There are no easy, cost-free

options. But our perpetual presence in Iraq has sapped our military

strength, undermined our credibility around the world, and limited our

investments in domestic priorities like health care and education.

This week, the House of Representatives has a choice: Either endorse

the President's open-ended commitment, or adopt a plan that demands

accountability, sets a timeline for redeployment, and restores the

readiness of our Armed Forces.

The President's strategy of indefinite intervention is simply not

sustainable. The situation in Iraq has moved beyond our military's

ability to shape events in a positive direction. Extending our presence

merely delays our ability to recover the ground we have lost, our

diplomatic initiative, our global reputation, and the broken state of

our ground forces.

The Iraq Accountability Act has three key components:

First, it uses President Bush's own benchmarks to require the Iraqis

to assume responsibility for their own security. If they meet those

benchmarks, all American forces would leave Iraq by the summer of 2008.

If they do not, American forces will leave as early as the end of this

year.

Second, the bill supports our Armed Forces by requiring the President

to certify that any troops deployed to Iraq are fully and properly

equipped, and that their deployment follows Department of Defense

standards for readiness and rest between deployments.

Third, it provides funds needed to ensure that returning troops and

veterans receive the best possible health care and other services they

deserve.

The American people expect us to say where we stand on the war in

Iraq. By supporting the Iraq Accountability Act we are voting to use

the long-neglected powers of Congress to bring U.S. involvement in the

Iraqi civil war to an end. I urge, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to

support the Iraq Accountability Act when it comes to the floor

tomorrow.