Mr. Speaker, every parent, every parent, whether living

in the United States or in Iraq, wants only the best for their

children. They want their kids to feel safe and to have the very best

of everything. And every parent wants their child to get a quality

education.

Worldwide over 100 million children do not attend school.

Unfortunately, the trends of school attendance in Iraq are very

discouraging. According to recent UNICEF reports, high levels of street

violence and lawlessness are keeping school attendance levels,

particularly of girls, to low levels.

Often because families can no longer afford to keep their children in

school, girls are pulled out to assist their families with household

work and to look after younger siblings while their brothers finish

school.

The large refugee crisis is another impediment to education. UNHCR

estimates that 500,000 school-age Iraqi children now live in

neighboring countries. This could put a severe strain on neighboring

countries' schools and their school systems, that is, if children are

even allowed to attend school while living as a refugee. Additionally,

refugee families often do not have money for tuition, and refugee

children may not speak the local language.

This summer, the United Nations launched a global appeal for $129

million to get more Iraqi refugee children into schools. This is just a

Band-Aid, Mr. Speaker, on the situation.

Until Iraq is stabilized and families can return to their homes,

we're going to have a generation of children who have lived their lives

on the run, without feeling safe and without an education.

In a nation with a rich legacy of education, a nation that has

produced some of the world's leading doctors, architects and artists,

parents are watching their children denied an education? This is not

the future we want for American children, and it is not the future we

want for Iraqi children.

Iraqis of all ages deserve a safe and secure future and one that is

enriched by education.

We know how to provide that future, and it's by ending the occupation

and returning sovereignty to Iraq. If this administration would only

listen to the Congress, or even to the Iraqi people themselves, they

would see that there is overwhelming support to bring our troops home.

This does not mean that we would end our commitment to the Iraqi

people. In fact, the American people have a long history of generosity

and great humanitarian works. Our dedication to the children of Iraq

would not end with our military presence. Iraq is only made less stable

with an endless American occupation, and our very presence appears to

be inspiring even more insurgents.

Let's do what is in the best interests of the United States and of

Iraq. Let's renew our humanitarian commitment to the Iraqi people.

Let's end this misguided occupation. Let's bring our troops and

military contractors home.