Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the World Health

Organization released a report that can only be called shocking and

appalling. Cholera is on the rise in Iraq and spreading to urban areas

like Baghdad and Basrah, and some of the northern provinces as well.

As most of you know, cholera is a diarrheal illness caused by

infection of the intestine. People get cholera from drinking water or

food contaminated with the cholera bacteria, and it spreads rapidly in

areas with inadequate treatment of sewage and drinking water.

This sounds like a disease of the Third World, not one of a developed

and wealthy country, certainly not a country where the United States is

propping up the health care system, right? Then why have the confirmed

number of cases of cholera risen to more than 2,000? In one week alone,

616 new cases were discovered. The WHO estimates that more than 30,000

people have fallen ill with similar symptoms which may later be

confirmed as cholera.

This is a shocking epidemic. As a result, the Iraqi Government is

considering travel restrictions to limit the spread of this often

deadly disease, particularly for children.

In a country already crippled by refugees and internally displaced

people, the situation grows more severe every single day. Why, as we

are spending more than $13 million an hour for the occupation of Iraq,

$13 million an hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, can we not join

with the international community to provide for the most basic human

needs? We are talking clean drinking water and proper sanitation. This

is not reinventing the wheel or putting a man on the Moon.

Clean water and sanitary conditions, is that too much to ask? I guess

it might be for our leader at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue,

because the administration spews a lot of rhetoric about liberating the

Iraqi people. Does that mean crumbling infrastructure, sectarian

fighting, a massive refugee crisis, and on top of that, a possible

epidemic of cholera?

Iraqi families need to start their lives over again. They need their

kids to be able to go to school. And they need to start their

businesses and reopen them. They want real sovereignty

over their own nation. They want U.S. troops out.

Real leadership in Iraq means bringing our troops home and offering

humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq. We must join with the

international community to provide relief, reconstruction, and

reconciliation. This is the only way forward for Iraq.

Force and occupation will not rebuild Iraq. It will not provide

healthier communities. And most importantly, it will not provide a

peaceful future for the people of Iraq.

Bring our troops home. Bring hope to our military families at home

and the Iraq families yearning for peace.