Mr. Speaker, today is the fourth anniversary of our

invasion of Iraq. We still don't necessarily know why we went to war in

Iraq; I certainly don't. This is my first year in Congress, and we have

a very serious and important matter coming up this week which we have

to vote on. I haven't decided exactly how I am going to vote. I know I

want us out of Iraq. I want our troops to be safe, but be protected,

and I want our veterans to be looked after.

There is a proposal to come up to suggest we should have a definite

date, September 1 of 2008, to have our troops out of Iraq, and to have

certain benchmarks which the Iraqi Government has to meet, and have our

President certify they have met them at different times in the summer

and next fall.

There are certain restrictions on the troops that says that the

military can't send folks in if they haven't had a year off, they are

not properly trained and don't have proper equipment, which is kind of

hard for me to fathom, that after 4 years of war, we are only now

getting around to saying our troops should have proper equipment,

proper training and proper rest. It's hard for me to imagine what's

gone on the last 4 years, what type of oversight or undersight has

taken place in this Congress, and what type of concern that the

administration has had for our troops, sending them into Iraq without

proper training and without proper equipment.

It borders on malfeasance, and it makes me wonder, in voting for $100

billion in the supplemental budget, if it's not negligence, and Mr.

Speaker knows as a lawyer it may be beyond that. It may be gross

negligence of this administration, which has shown it doesn't know how

to handle money, particularly in sending it to Iraq, where $10 billion

is totally missing, other monies have just disappeared, to give them

$100 billion and to give them the care and custody of American men and

women, great patriots who have volunteered for military duty.

We have had 3,200 Americans die in Iraq, over 3,200 now, and

casualties in the area of 20,000. For every day we stay there longer,

there will be more and more casualties and more and more deaths.

I understand the proposal being put forth is an advancement, and it's

more than the Senate will do, and it's more

than the administration will permit, because they have said they will

veto anything with a date, anything with conditions, anything that is

reasonable, that reflects what the American people want to have, which

is the same policy in Iraq to get our troops home and to find a way to

end America's nightmare, which has, indeed, been a nightmare.

We were told the mission was accomplished. I don't know what has been

accomplished. I have read newspapers today, and everybody, people in

Iraq, have no medical care, they have very little electricity, they are

living in squalor, and they say life was better with Saddam Hussein

than it is now. We have not improved the lives of the Iraqi people. We

have pretty much destroyed their country, and we claim we did it for

freedom.

But one of the conditions upon which we will measure the benchmarks

is if they give us their oil and give it to some of our multinational

companies, which makes you wonder if they hate us because of our love

for freedom, or if they hate us because we want to take their oil.

Maybe that is what it was all about was oil, blood for oil.

It's hard for me not to support a progressive measure, which I know

Speaker Pelosi and I know my party's leadership is going to advance, to

try to bring some end to this nightmare. But at the same time it's

difficult for me to give another dollar and another life to the care

and custody of this administration. I do think it's gross negligence

probably to do so when you look at what they have done over the last 4

years.

I read about death this weekend in Iraq, soldiers who died who were

20 years old, 19 years old, 21 years old, and I thought about how young

they were. They are children basically, children with guns, going over

to Iraq, and they are dying because they fall, they have an IED blow

them up. It's not mano a mano, it is not being shot by Iraqis. It's

IEDs. Every day we stay, there will be more and more American men and

women being blown up, being sent to inadequate facilities such as

Walter Reed because we haven't gotten out.

I don't know that the situation there will get any better. The

President today called a press conference and spoke and said we need to

keep going forward; we won't know in weeks, we won't know in months, we

won't know until longer if this surge or escalation will work.

It's not going to work. You learn from history. If you don't learn

from history, you are a fool. The fact is you look at the past, you can

look at the Sunnis and the Shi'a and the situation over there and the

insurgents, and our being there has not made a difference. It just

means that American men and women have died, and the dollars that

should have been spent in cities in America to help children with

education and health care hasn't been spent.

I am conflicted. I hope the people in my district will let me know

what they think. Should we spend another dollar and sacrifice another

life, or should we get out as soon as possible?