Mr. Speaker, those elected to serve in the people's

House sometimes must decide matters of war and peace, in other words,

matters of life and death, and nothing is more important.

Today we stand at the crossroads of one such momentous decision, and

let

no one doubt that the lives of American soldiers and Iraqi civilians

hang in the balance.

This is a vote of conscience and one of the most important votes I

will ever cast in the House of Representatives.

I wish we were debating the language of the 1970 McGovern-Hatfield

amendment. It called for directing funds only for the safe and orderly

withdrawal of U.S. troops from Indochina. I enter into the Record at

this point the Iraq version of the McGovern-Hatfield that I want to

offer.

I wish the legislation before us was that direct, but we do have

legislation before us and a momentous decision to make.

Over 4 years ago, a vote in this House enabled this President to take

America to war. Earlier today I told Speaker Pelosi that I will cast my

vote to bring America home to peace. I want to get all of the soldiers

out of Iraq tomorrow, but safely extracting over 140,000 U.S. troops

cannot be done overnight, and the safety of our soldiers in leaving

Iraq must be paramount.

I want to end this incomprehensible war tomorrow, but as a medical

doctor, I know that no matter what we do today, this war will go on for

decades in the minds of psychologically wounded soldiers and in the

bodies of severely injured soldiers.

What we have before us today is a first step, and despite my serious

misgivings about it, it is a step in the right direction, which is out

of Iraq.

Speaker Pelosi has given America a plan, a timetable and a course of

action demonstrating the leadership we have not seen from the President

on Iraq. The President has lost the trust of the American people, and

he deepens the mistrust at home and around the world every time he

speaks about Iraq.

Instead of confronting reality, the President stubbornly adheres to a

fiction of his own creation that a military victory will be achieved in

a nation in the throes of a full-scale civil war, with an American

presence inciting unspeakable violence against our soldiers from all

sides.

The Iraqi people have seen their lives sink into misery. Millions

have fled their country or been displaced from their homes. Those

remaining live in terror that a trip to the market will end their life,

and very often it does.

The Iraqi people want us out because they see the U.S. as an

occupier. They want the U.S. out because it is their country and their

oil, not ours.

This war should never have started, and Americans at the end of the

21st century will still be paying for this Presidential misadventure.

Preying on the fears of the American people, this President devised a

war-first policy, unheard of in American history. The President

implemented his chilling foreign policy in Iraq. When just cause for a

war did not exist, the administration made it up, preying on America's

vulnerabilities after 9/11.

They called it a war against terror, but now we know it was a war of

revenge and a war to control oil. It was never about exporting

democracy. It was always about exploiting the fears of the American

people to do what the White House had been planning long before 9/11:

Invade Iraq, control its government, and enable foreign oil companies

to reap a bonanza of profits by extracting Iraq oil and perpetuating

America's addiction to oil.

Speaker Pelosi has given us a plan, not as strong as I want, but one

I will support as a bare minimum because it has a timetable and demands

accountability from Iraq leaders; bare minimum, but dramatically better

than what we have, a war without end from a President incapable of only

escalation, not negotiation.

The heroes of our Nation, the soldiers fighting and dying on the

front lines, deserve to come home. The Iraq people deserve to decide

the future of their own country.

With this legislation, we acknowledge the wisdom and the will of the

American people. We realize that the Iraq war is a fraud, and

perpetuating it by sacrificing more innocent U.S. and Iraq lives is a

tragedy we can no longer tolerate.

I urge my colleagues to vote with Speaker Pelosi and vote for peace.