Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the

Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing me to speak.

Before I get into my prepared remarks, part of the resolution, if my

colleagues would go to page 5 of the resolution, says as part of the

justification required, the President shall, at a minimum, address

whether it is necessary for the Armed Forces to carry out the following

missions: protecting U.S. diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens,

including Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions;

serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions; but

also, engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its

affiliated organizations in Iraq.

So while I sat here on the floor listened and heard, ``we are bailing

out of attacking al Qaeda,'' we are not doing that. This resolution

says we will still be there. The President has to certify, though, that

is what we are doing. We are not shoring up the Iraqi Government; we

are fighting al Qaeda, who brought us September 11. So anybody who says

we are leaving is just wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution and this

legislation, and thank Chairman Skelton for his work on the bill. Like

Chairman Skelton, I want to thank our soldiers, sailors, airmen and

Marines and their families who are serving our country.

I have stated before, we must let the Iraqi Government know our

commitment is not open-ended. I have not supported efforts for

immediate withdrawal, but this bill, just like our first supplemental

sent to the President, which he vetoed, lets the Iraqi Government know

that they need to make some tough choices to stabilize their country

within the next several months.

It also gives our administration time to have a comprehensive

strategy in Iraq, and allows the troops to remain to protect our

diplomatic facilities and fight al Qaeda, and training and equipping

the Iraqi security forces.

As this legislation states, we give the President the authority to

use the Armed Forces to defend the national security of the United

States against the continuing threat posed by the Iraqi government at

that time. But we won that battle. The government was removed. The

power and its leader indicted, tried and convicted, and executed by the

newly elected, now-democratic government of Iraq.

This bill will bring our troops home by April 1 of next year--that

will be more than 5 years since the war began. U.S. taxpayers have

spent billions of dollars, and thousands of troops have given their

lives to bring security and stability to Iraq.

While the current Iraqi government has been organizing and security

forces have been training, our forces have been responsible for every

facet of security in Iraq. Our troops defeated Saddam's Army, worked to

control the country, policed Iraq's streets, protected the transitional

and elected governments, and trained Iraq security forces.

Our military has given the Iraqi government, the Iraqi security

forces, and the Iraqi people every opportunity to have a stable,

democratic country. It is time to let the Iraqi people know that 5

years is long enough--they must take responsibility for the future of

their country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill to bring our

troops home in a safe, responsible timeframe.