Mr. Speaker, let me thank the chairman of

the Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing members of that committee to

show their commitment through their legislative work in a hearing at

the early stages of his leadership when we were allowed to present

solutions. They were not Republican solutions or Democratic solutions.

They were solutions for those of us who love America, and I just want

to simply reinforce that. I thank Mr. Skelton for his leadership.

I have legislation that declares a military success, and I rise today

to make it clear that I believe that the fallen in battle are heroes,

and those who still fight carry their banner, for 3,611 have died, and

I don't know why we're not on this floor declaring a military victory,

thanking our soldiers.

And my good friend from Texas says that he supports the Iraq Study

Group. So do I and I have legislation. We all have legislation that

responds to the Iraq Study Group. I might remind him that that report,

bipartisan report, speaks articulately to redeployment, and so when we

look at the costs of the war, $120 billion, Americans are asking,

should one more drop of blood be shed? And my answer to that is, no.

Should we engage? Yes. Should we involve in the surge of diplomacy?

Absolutely.

We want to make sure that all of those nation states can work to help

solve the divide, the civil war. But we must face the facts that this

process that the President is continuing to repeat does not work. It is

wracked with corruption and misdirection. There were no weapons of mass

destruction.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I have been disturbed

this whole week as I listened to the Secretary of Homeland Security

speak about his gut feeling of the possibility of a terrorist attack.

I'm a member of that committee. I live every day with the idea that the

question will be asked by Americans to the Homeland Security Committee

and the Homeland Security Department, does the Secretary realize that

we have fueled the fires of terrorism by training terrorists in this

war.

And so when I speak of why we must end, it is to save lives. It is to

reconcile Iraq, and it is to make America safer. I ask for support of

the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible

Redeployment From Iraq Act. I rise in strong support of this

legislation because I am listening, and responding to the will of the

American people. Last November 2006, Americans went to polls by the

millions united in their resolve to vote for change. They voted for a

new direction and a change in the Bush administration's disastrous

policy in Iraq. The new Democratic majority heard them and responded by

passing H.R. 1591, the Iraq Accountability Act. The President vetoed

the bill, demanding instead a continuation of the ancien regime under

which the Republican-led Congress gave him a blank check to mismanage

the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq.

Those days are over. No matter how many veto threats the President

issues, this Congress is not going to give him a blank check to

escalate and continue the war ad infinitum. It is long past time for

change in Iraq. It is time for the people and Government of Iraq to

take primary responsibility for their own country. It is time for the

President to recognize the reality on the ground in Iraq. The time when

a surge in troops is useful and necessary is past. It is now time to

redeploy our troops and launch a diplomatic surge for national and

political reconciliation in Iraq. H.R. 2956 will help achieve this goal

and that is why I support the measure.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more important issue facing the Congress,

the President, and the American people than the war in Iraq. It is a

subject which agitates the passions of all Americans, including Members

of Congress. The Framers understood that while the military does the

fighting, a nation goes to war. That is why the Framers lodged the

power to declare war in the Congress, the branch of Government closest

to the people. They knew that the decision to go to war was too

important to be left to the whim of a single person, no matter how wise

or well-informed he or she might be.

Four years ago, President Bush stood under a banner that proclaimed

``Mission Accomplished.'' If the mission was to further place our

troops in harm's way at the hands of insurgents and sectarian violence,

then it is mission accomplished. After spending more than $450 billion

sacrificing the lives of 3,611 of America's finest citizen-soldiers,

what have we accomplished and where are we headed?

I cannot support the President's waging of a war that has no clear

direction, does not meet the benchmarks that the President set, and has

no visible target.

Four years after launching the invasion, conquest, and occupation of

Iraq, the evidence is clear and irrefutable: The preemptive invasion of

Iraq, while a spectacularly executed military operation, was a

strategic blunder without parallel in the history of American foreign

policy. This is what can happen when the Congress allows itself to be

stampeded into authorizing a president to launch a preemptive war of

choice.

It is time to change our strategy in Iraq. It is time to engage the

key stakeholders in the Middle East and make real strides towards

securing a just and lasting peace in Iraq and for the Iraqi people. And

most important, bring our troops home so they can be reunited with

their families, friends, and neighbors.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 2956. The Responsible

Redeployment From Iraq Act requires a responsible redeployment of U.S.

troops beginning within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1,

2008. The legislation requires the President to publicly justify the

post-redeployment missions for the U.S. military in Iraq and the

minimum number of troops necessary to carry out those missions.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is consistent with the advice of

military and foreign policy experts, ensures the safety of our men and

women in uniform, addresses our commitment to fighting terrorism, and

reflects the will of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, the need for a new direction in Iraq could not be

clearer. In the face of mounting evidence that progress is not being

made in Iraq, military leaders, defense experts, Republican and

Democratic Members of Congress, and the American people are demanding

change. Yet the President continues to urge continued support for a

failed policy that is not making America safer or supporting our

troops.

In a report released today by the White House, the administration

concedes that violence continues in Iraq and that the Iraqi Government

has failed to meet key benchmarks endorsed by the President in January

and political reconciliation is nonexistent. By the Bush

administration's own admission, there is unsatisfactory progress on all

of the political reconciliation benchmarks announced by the President

on January 10, 2007.

In fact, just this week, the National Security Network reported that

since the President announced his ``surge'' policy 6 months ago, more

than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, approximately 600 have been

killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush and Vice President Cheney have been given

numerous chances and ample time by the American people and the Congress

to straighten out the mess in Iraq. They have failed. It is little

wonder that the criticism of the administration's failed policy in Iraq

is mounting by the day. Respected military leaders, like LTG William

Odom, have spoken forcefully. According to Lieutenant General Odom,

``No effective new strategy can be devised for the United States until

it begins withdrawing its forces from Iraq. Only that step will break

the paralysis that now confronts us.''

Key Republican Senators are joining the chorus of critics. In

addition to Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Senator Richard

Lugar, some of the President's allies in Congress have spoken out.

Senator Pete Domenici says, ``There's no reason to wait . . . [I am]

trying to tell [Bush] that he must change his ways because there is

nothing positive happening.'' Senator Elizabeth Dole says, ``It is my

firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in

2008.'' Senator Lamar Alexander says, ``The President needs a new

strategy.''

And just this week, in a USA Today/Gallup Poll, more than 70 percent

of Americans favor removal of almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April

2008, leaving a limited number for counterterrorism efforts.

Finally Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation because it is

grounded in the fundamental principles I first announced in February of

this year when I introduced H.R. 930, the Military Success in Iraq and

Diplomatic Surge for National and Political Reconciliation in Iraq Act

of 2007. I introduced this legislation, the Military Success in Iraq

Act of 2007, MSIA or ``Messiah,'' to offer an honorable deliverance

from Iraq. Let me explain.

In October 2002, the Congress authorized the President to use

military force against Iraq to achieve the following objectives:

(1) To disarm Iraq of any weapons of mass destruction that could

threaten the security of the United States and international peace in

the Persian Gulf region;

(2) To change the Iraqi regime so that Saddam Hussein and his

Baathist party no longer posed a threat to the people of Iraq or its

neighbors;

(3) To bring to justice any members of al Qaeda known or found to be

in Iraq bearing responsibility for the attacks on the United States,

its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on

September 11,2001;

(4) To ensure that the regime of Saddam Hussein would not provide

weapons of mass destruction to international terrorists, including al

Qaeda; and

(5) To enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council

resolutions regarding Iraq.

Every one of these objectives has long been accomplished. Iraq does

not possess weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein has been

deposed, captured, and dealt with by the Iraqi people. The American

military has caught or killed virtually every member of al Qaeda in

Iraq that was even remotely responsible for the 9-11 attack on our

country. Last, all relevant U.N. resolutions relating to Iraq have been

enforced. In other words, every objective for which the use of force in

Iraq was authorized by the 2002 resolution has been achieved.

Mr. Speaker, since the objectives which led Congress to pass the 2002

Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) have been achieved, I

believe the authorization to use that military force expires

automatically. My legislation affirms this proposition. Additionally, I

believe, and my legislation provides, that it is the Congress that is

the ultimate arbiter as to whether the objectives set forth in a

congressional AUMF have been achieved.

Mr. Speaker, where a Congressional authorization to use military

force has expired, the President must obtain a new authorization to

continue the use force. My legislation requires the President to do

that as well. Finally, my bill requires that if the Congress does not

vote to reauthorize the use of force in Iraq within 90 days after

determining that the objectives set forth in the 2002 AUMF have been

achieved, all American armed forces in Iraq must be redeployed out of

Iraq. Thus, under my legislation, an up-or-down vote must be held by

the House and Senate to continue waging war in Iraq.

I am not talking about ``cutting and running,'' or surrendering to

terrorists. And I certainly am not talking about staying in Iraq

forever or the foreseeable future. The Armed Forces won the war they

were sent to fight. Their civilian leadership has not succeeded in

winning the peace. That is why the United States should surge

diplomatically and politically.

Title II of my legislation, the ``Diplomatic Surge for Political and

National Reconciliation in Iraq Act,'' implements twelve of the most

important recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. This approach is now

gaining widespread support among many who had previously disparaged

diplomacy in favor of military force.

All six of Iraq's neighbors--Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi

Arabia, and Kuwait--have an interest in a stabilized Iraq because as

the Iraq Study Group report makes clear, none of these countries wants

to live with an Iraq that, after our redeployment, becomes a failed

state or a humanitarian catastrophe that could become a haven for

terrorists or hemorrhages millions more refugees who will stream into

neighboring countries.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the enormous financial cost, the human

cost to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces has also

been high but they have willingly paid it. Operation Iraqi Freedom

has exacerbated the Veterans Administration health care facility

maintenance backlog; placed an undue strain on the delivery of medical

treatment and rehabilitative services for current and new veterans; and

exacted a heavy toll on the equipment, training and readiness

requirements, and the families of the men and women of the United

States Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, every day when I walk into my office I am reminded of the

courageous young men and women who have given their lives in service to

our nation. Outside my office I have displayed a poster-board that

displays the names and faces of those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The poster-board is nearly full. I do not want to start another board.

Let me call the roll of honor of the remarkable sons and daughters of

Houston, Texas who have made the ultimate sacrifice and gave the last

full measure of devotion: Capt. Eric L. Allton, Petty Officer 1st Class

Howard E. Babcock IV, Spec. Adolfo C. Carballo, Staff Sgt. Brian T.

Craig, Staff Sgt. Terrence D. Dunn, Pfc. Analaura Esparza Gutierrez,

1st Lt. David M. Fraser, Lance Cpl. Phillip C. George, Spec. Clinton R.

Gertson, Capt. Andrew R. Houghton, Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak, Spec. John

P. Johnson, Pfc. Roy L. Jones III, Cpl. Brian M. Kennedy, Staff Sgt.

Dexter S. Kimble,

Spec. Scott Q. Larson Jr., Staff Sgt. Hector Leija, Pfc. Jesus A.

Leon-Perez, Sgt. Keelan L. Moss, Tech. Sgt. Walter M. Moss Jr., Staff

Sgt. Kenneth I. Pugh, Staff Sgt. William D. Richardson, Staff Sgt.

Timothy J. Roark, Sgt. Michael T. Robertson, Cpl. Benjamin S. Rosales,

Staff Sgt. Alberto V. Sanchez, Pfc. Leroy Sandoval Jr., Pfc. Armando

Soriano, Cpl. Tomas Sotelo Jr., Sgt. Danny R. Soto, Spec. Juan M.

Torres, Lance Cpl. Thomas J. Zapp.

Mr. Speaker, the misguided, mismanaged, and costly debacle that is

the Iraq War which was preemptively launched by President Bush in March

2003 despite the opposition of me and 125 of my colleagues in the House

of Representatives has lasted longer than America's involvement in

WorId War II, the greatest conflict in all of human history.

But there is a difference. The Second World War ended in complete and

total victory for the United States and its allies. But then again, in

that conflict America was led by FDR, a great Commander-in-Chief, who

had a plan to win the war and secure the peace, listened to his

generals, and sent troops in sufficient numbers and sufficiently

trained and equipped to do the job.

My friends, I say with sadness that we have not enjoyed that same

quality of leadership

throughout the conduct of the Iraq War. The results, not surprisingly,

have been disastrous. To date, the war in Iraq has claimed the lives of

3,611 brave servicemen and women. The last three months of the war have

been among the deadliest (104 in April, 123 in May, 101 in June, and 32

in the first week of July). More than 26,690 Americans have been

wounded, many suffering the most horrific injuries. American taxpayers

have paid nearly $450 billion to sustain this misadventure. To grasp

the magnitude of this number, consider that American taxpayers are

spending: $120,000,000,000 per year; $10,000,000,000 per month;

$2,307,692,380 per week; $329,670,330 per day; $13,736,264 per hour;

$228,938 per minute; $3,816 per second.

Mr. Speaker, last November the American people signaled clearly their

loss of confidence in the President's leadership and their desire for a

new direction in Iraq. The new Democratic majority has begun to

deliver. And we will not rest, Mr. Speaker, until we are clearly on a

glide path to the day when our troops come home.

And even then our work will not be done. We must still be about the

business of repairing the damage to America's international reputation

and prestige. But this Democratic majority, led by the Progressive

Caucus and the Out of Iraq Caucus, has ushered in a new era of

oversight, accountability, and transparency to defense and

reconstruction contracting and procurement.

I urge all members to join me in supporting H.R. 2956. This is the

best way to ensure accountability to our soldiers who have been sent

into battle without proper training or equipment or a clear mission. It

is the best way to keep faith with our veterans who are not getting the

best medical care when they come home. Passing this legislation is

essential to restoring our military that is being stretched to the

limits by the Bush policy. Last, it is absolutely necessary to regain

the confidence of the American people who demand a new direction in

Iraq.