I thank the chairman for this time.

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

For more than 4 years, our men and women in uniform have faithfully,

skillfully served in Iraq. This legislation makes clear that the

Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future.

Mr. Speaker, when Marine General ``Jack'' Sheehan, a former top NATO

commander, declined to serve the White House as war czar for

Afghanistan and Iraq, he stated his reasons for not accepting this

position: ``The very fundamental issue is they don't know where the

hell they're going.'' That is what Marine Corps GEN Jack Sheehan said.

General Sheehan's statement is why the Congress and the administration

need to work together to develop an end point to the war strategy in

Iraq. It is time for Congress to meet its constitutional responsibility

by defining what victory in Iraq will look like.

Stay the course is not the answer. As Colin Powell said last week,

``We have to face the reality of the situation that is on the ground

and not what we would want it to be. It is not a civil war that can be

put down or solved by the Armed Forces of the United States.'' Colin

Powell, I quoted him. That is his statement.

We are now in the 5th year in Iraq, and 3,611 Americans have died in

the war. Mr. Speaker, to this date I have sent over 6,400 letters to

the families and extended families of our men and women in the military

who have lost their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq, and every time I

sign a letter, my heart aches.

Chairman Skelton's plan provides a comprehensive strategy to maintain

and advance the diplomatic, political, and economic components of

United States national security interests in Iraq. It has taken this

country in a direction that it needs to consider.

Mr. Speaker, I close by reminding this Congress what Rudyard Kipling

said in his writings known as ``Epitaphs of War,'' and we need to all

be responsible for this, and this is my quote from him: ``If any

question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied.''