I thank the gentleman for yielding, and for the effort he

and others are making on the floor here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to this editorial today from the

Washington Post which says, ``It seems like just weeks ago''--because

it was that--``that Congress approved funding for the war in Iraq and

instructed General David Petraeus to report back on the war's progress

in September. Before Congress begins ordering withdrawals, they should

at least give those generals the months they asked for to see whether

their strategy can offer some help.'' Mr. Speaker, I think that, in a

nutshell, sums up what we ought to be talking about today instead of

what we are talking about today.

I've heard this resolution referred to as a ``new way forward,'' but

it doesn't provide a new way forward. It, frankly, serves no purpose in

meeting the challenge that we face today with our totalitarian enemies.

I'm told that, yesterday, in the House Appropriations Committee, 45

minutes was spent debating whether cats should be declawed before they

were allowed into public housing; 45 minutes to decide whether cats

should be declawed in public housing, and by the way, that committee

decided they should, and no minutes spent to talk

about this bill. No hearing on an April 1 deadline. No outside

testimony on a bill that was quickly put together to serve a purpose

of, I believe, changing the subject of the failure of this Congress to

get its other work done back to a subject that is obviously creating

stress in America today, and that is, what do we do about the

totalitarian enemies we face and their lack of appreciation for

innocent human life?

Commanders in the field say that a responsible deployment from Iraq

would take at least a year. Maybe that's why we didn't have a hearing

on how long it would take to responsibly and safely leave Iraq. There

was no testimony from the military about an April 1 deadline. In fact,

I can't even find any evidence of any consultation with the military

about an April 1 deadline.

And what does ``limited presence'' on page three of this, what does

that mean? What does ``limited presence'' mean? I suppose it means

whatever it needs to mean when you go home and explain why you voted

for the bill, because it doesn't mean anything. Limited presence means

nothing, and it's a key criteria of this approach.

The same people who say we went into Iraq without a well thought-out

plan now want to leave without a plan at all. And that's what is wrong

with what we're talking about today.

Let's go back to page three of the bill itself. The President is

supposed to report back in January things like the projected number of

armed forces necessary to carry out the missions. The projected annual

cost of the missions. The projected duration of the missions, I guess

to suggest that there really aren't going to be missions if you leave

April 1 if you've been on the other side of this issue up to now, if a

few weeks ago you were for giving the generals in the field up until

September, and now you're for deciding what we're going to be doing in

April without knowing what that September situation is about.

And it goes on, on page 3, to talk about whether it's necessary, I

guess defining the missions, whether it's necessary to have Armed

Forces to carry out the following missions; protecting United States

diplomatic facilities and United States citizens, including members of

the Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions. You

can pretty much make this, I guess, whatever you want it to. Serving in

rolls consistent with customary diplomatic positions. Engaging in

actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its affiliated

organizations.

Now, we're going to decide, apparently the President should decide in

January whether that continues to be an important thing, or whether

training and equipping members of the Iraqi Armed Forces continues to

be an important thing.

Where was the effort made to determine the impact on al Qaeda

worldwide, or to determine the impact on Hezbollah or other agents of

terror and how that would affect our security in the United States if

we precipitously leave one more time, if we precipitously leave without

a plan?

Only a few weeks ago, again, as others have verified all over the

country in editorials today, I and others stood on this floor and said,

our troops deserve a funding bill without strings and without

congressional pork. Today, I'm here to say that they deserve a chance

to carry out their mission without looking over their shoulder all the

time to see what the Congress of the United States is about to do next.