Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker,

and thanks to Mr. Skelton, the outstanding Congressman from Missouri.

I rise to support H.R. 2956. If we could stop this war today, it

would please my constituents. And if we could do it without more

violence, I would be picketing to do it.

All of us know, that have any common sense, that we cannot bring the

troops home today, but we can develop a good strategy to make sure that

they get the message in Iraq that we are coming home. We still have

150,336 troops over there. Are we going to stay until they all get

killed?

We talk about how many have lost lives. I was a nurse in the

Veterans' Administration for 15 years, and I saw the damaged lives of

these veterans coming home from war. What are we doing for ourselves

and the future? This is not a partisan issue, this is an issue that

saves America.

Mr. Speaker, the most recent report from the Department of Defense,

states there are 150,336 brave American troops in the middle of a

violent civil war in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the President has repeatedly made it clear that nothing

will discourage him from pursuing a war that has no end in sight.

Congress cannot and should not keep waiting for the President to

change course.

We must change the course ourselves, 2008 must be a year of

transition in Iraq. Iraq has to grow out of the shadow of the United

States.

Iraq needs to take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from

its own mistakes, and find its own solutions to its own problems.

Recently, the Iraq Study Group suggested that the time has since

passed when one country alone could work alongside the Iraqi leadership

to steer Iraq's future.

Rather, as the report says, ``the United States should immediately

launch a New Diplomatic Offensive to build an international consensus

for stability in Iraq and the region.''

This recommendation is perhaps the last- best hope for war weary

Iraqis and Americans alike.

Mr. Speaker, our brave men and women are serving with great honor in

Iraq. Their service has paved the way for a democratic society.

It is time for the Iraqi government to stand up, so our troops can

begin to stand-down.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.