Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R.

2956, which would compel a responsible exit of U.S. troops from Iraq.

I voted against giving the President the authority to go to war in

Iraq. Two years ago, Brad Miller and I introduced legislation to

terminate the authorization and to require of the President a

comprehensive exit strategy. The President has responded to calls for

change by stubbornly adhering to a failed strategy that has cost our

Nation dearly in blood, treasure and moral authority. He has rejected

Congress's constitutional role in determining policy, and he has

ignored the will of the American people. This obstinate, irresponsible,

destructive course must not continue.

Now, the President has put great stock in the recent surge in U.S.

forces, but the surge seems mainly to have shifted the locus of the

fighting. The intent was to create space for Iraq's political leaders

to make the hard choices that will lead their country forward, but

those hard choices are not being made. We can no longer leave our

foreign policy at the mercy of sectarian and political forces we cannot

control.

A mission of simply biding time, at great cost in blood and treasure,

is not one that we can or should support. We must begin to bring our

troops home.

Yet, as I and many others have repeatedly argued, it not only matters

that we leave Iraq, but it also matters greatly how we leave. We cannot

afford the same mistakes that the Bush administration made in entering

Iraq, without a plan for protecting troops, for managing consequences

or for giving the Iraqi people every possible chance to succeed.

Therefore, the bill before us would provide the discipline of a

timeline to the Bush administration for beginning and completing the

termination of combat operations and the redeployment of our troops. It

would also compel the development of a comprehensive strategy for

managing the redeployment and addressing the challenges that Iraq will

continue to present after our troops are gone.

Mr. Speaker, the continued presence of 160,000 American troops in

Iraq is not sustainable and does not serve our national interest. It is

time not merely to urge but to require a change of course. This

legislation does just that, and I urge its passage.