Thank you, Congressman Hunter. Thank

you for your leadership on behalf of our troops. And I appreciate that

your son, Duncan, Jr., has served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, just today we received President Bush's report to

Congress on progress in Iraq. I find it sad for American families that

on the same day the House is considering legislation that sets

arbitrary deadlines and timelines for retreat, the provisions of H.R.

2956 mandate a hasty troop withdrawal starting within 120 days.

Additionally, the bill states that this withdrawal would be conducted

in a safe and orderly way. Logistically, it would be impossible to

remove our troops safely from Iraq in this short time line. Such rapid

retreat would embolden the enemy, leaving American forces subject to

ambushes, rockets and IED attacks.

As a 31-year veteran of the Army National Guard, and as a father of

four sons in the military, my oldest an Iraq veteran, I especially

understand the threats to our troops. In my seven visits to Iraq and

three to Afghanistan, I've been continually inspired by the competence

of our military leaders and the dedicated troops.

In today's edition of the Washington Post, the lead editorial makes

the case against arbitrary withdrawal. It states, ``The generals who

have devised a new strategy believe they are making faithful progress.

Before Congress begins managing rotation schedules and ordering

withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they ask

for to see whether their strategy can offer some new hope.''

Additionally, al Qaeda has stated that Iraq is the central front in

the global war on terrorism. And I believe to withdraw our troops

before their mission is complete would invite future attacks at home.

The Washington Post editorial states, ``Advocates of withdrawal would

like to believe that Afghanistan is now a central front in the war on

terror, but Iraq is not; believing that doesn't make sense.''

In conclusion, God bless our troops. We will never forget September

the 11th.

I urge defeat of H.R. 2956.