Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this

legislation.

The American people are not happy with the conflict in Iraq; I am not

pleased either. Every day, my constituents tell me their concerns with

Iraq, and I can understand their desire to put this behind us.

The reality is, however, that we cannot snap our fingers and make

things all better; it's not simply going to go away.

My friends on the other side of the aisle have argued for years that

we rushed headlong into Iraq without seriously considering the long-

term consequences. Yet with this legislation they are repeating the

very same mistake, only in reverse.

Staying the course is not a viable option, but neither is the fallacy

of the orderly, phased withdrawal proposed by this legislation. You

cannot gradually blow up a dam; once we begin to leave, chaos will

immediately ensue. So I ask my colleagues, what do you propose to do

after you order our troops away? What's your plan? Where's your

responsible and workable strategy and vision?

Unfortunately, such a scenario may prove inevitable. But my

colleagues hold forth this legislation as a plan: it's not. It's

political pabulum. It might give politicians cover, but it exposes our

servicemen to danger even greater than they already face. Ethnic,

tribal, and religious killings will increase by an order of magnitude.

The current refugee situation, already a disaster for Iraq's neighbors,

will be dwarfed by the exodus to come. Our own men and women in uniform

will be standing in front of a tsunami of violence.

What is required is a thoughtful, deliberative plan to make the best

of an undeniably bad situation. Such a plan is embodied in the

recommendations of the Iraq Study Group--the product of a concerted,

bipartisan and sincere effort on the part of some of our brightest

citizens.

I have long advocated we seriously follow--or at least debate--the

recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. Foreign policy and diplomatic

issues are usually complicated, nuanced and multi-leveled; the

situation in Iraq is no different. Yet all we have been given to

consider are all-or-nothing propositions.

I would welcome a bona fide discussion regarding how to move forward

in Iraq and in the Middle East generally--that is what we owe the

American people. What we have today is nothing but four hours cooing to

the other side's base. This is not leadership. No amendments were made

in order. There was no reaching out to Republicans like myself who felt

the surge was a mistake and are looking for another direction. What we

have is a framed ``take it or leave it,'' ``my way or the highway''

approach. That approach got us where we are--a healthy dialogue with

options is needed to appropriately disengage.

Two months remain until General Petraeus will be summoned before

Congress. He will give us--as we have charged him to do--an honest

assessment on where this ``surge'' has lead our troops and the Iraqi

people. I hope at that time, whether his testimony reveals success or

failure, this body will have the wherewithal to have a serious, open

debate on what options we have left.