Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support

of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Delivering the solemn

promise we made to set a new direction in Iraq, this legislation

provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm our support for the

responsible redeployment of our troops and a refocusing of our efforts

on the real threat that is facing America--fighting al-Qaeda in

Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another

terrorist attack against America.

Along with a great many of my colleagues, I spoke out against the

President's surge strategy when it was announced in January. We argued

then, as we reiterate today, that Iraq is engaged in a civil war and

thus political, not military, solutions are needed to address the

problems facing the region. Yet, the President continues to operate

under the assumption that somehow, some way, there is a military path

to success. In other words, his strategy continues to be ``stay the

course'' writ large.

It has now been seven months since the President announced his surge

strategy, with the stated goal of providing stability in Iraq so that

the political reforms that are needed to secure the region can take

place. Since then, more than 25,000 additional troops have deployed to

Iraq, of whom 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been

wounded. All of this while the Iraqi government has failed to meet any

of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January, violence rates

are at an all time high, and a recent government report estimates that

al Qaeda is the strongest it has been since the aftermath of the

September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Simply put, it is long past time for our involvement in this tragic

episode to come to an end. The Iraqi people are the only ones that can

bring a peaceful conclusion to this war.

It is unfair to ask our troops and their families to continue to

sacrifice while Iraqi leaders have done so little to achieve the

political and security goals asked of them. Therefore, it is imperative

that we begin the gradual redeployment of troops as soon as possible to

protect their lives and ensure the safety of America.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate my opposition to this war. I believe

the decision to invade Iraq is the single most devastating and

misguided foreign policy decision our Nation has ever made. I will vote

for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act because I believe it is

time to bring our troops home and end our involvement in this civil

war.