Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of

The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, and I thank Chairman

Skelton for his leadership and his dedication to the readiness of our

troops and the continuing excellence of the United States armed forces.

The President continues to ask this Congress and the American people

to ``stay the course'' in Iraq. Well, Mr. President, today the American

people and the Congress say, ``No more!!''

Instead, I add my voice once again to the growing number of retired

military generals, the Iraq Study Group, and untold thousands of rank-

and-file on the front lines who are calling for a new direction in

Iraq.

The success of our military depends on a sound strategy. Yet, instead

of fighting terrorists in the mountains of Afghanistan, our armed

forces are overextended after four years of refereeing a civil war in

the sands of Iraq.

The President's escalation of this war,--his so-called ``surge''--is

not working. That much is clear. Since the escalation of this war 6

months ago, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, 600 more

U.S. soldiers have died and more than 3,000 troops have been wounded.

Countless thousands of Iraqis are dead, and today the violence in Iraq

is at an all-time high!

Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq, but the Iraqi

government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the

President in January. Political reconciliation within Iraq is non-

existent. A change of course is long overdue.

The time has come for the United States to responsibly re-deploy our

troops from Iraq and to refocus our efforts on protecting Americans

from terrorism. The time has come for Iraqis to take primary

responsibility for their country and their security.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will do exactly that.

Let me be clear on one additional point. Democrats support the

troops. As a Member of the Appropriations Committee, I have

consistently voted to fund our troops and provide our soldiers in the

line of fire with the resources they need.

I do this because our brave service men and women are not risking

their lives each and every day for one political party or the other.

They are risking their lives for America.

Our Nation owes our troops a strategy that is worthy of their

sacrifice. But ``stay the course'' is not that strategy. It is a slogan

that continues to fail them.

No, Mr. Speaker, if we really want to support our troops, it is now

time to get them out of Iraq and re-deploy them to other areas where

they can fight the terrorists who have attacked, and who continue to

threaten our Nation.