Let me thank my colleague for yielding and say, thank

goodness that we're finally here.

Mr. Speaker, over 100 days trying to come to an agreement on how to

do the right thing for our men and women in the military fighting for

our freedom and our safety and our security right here at home. I ask

myself, why? What have we done over the last 100-plus days, and why has

it taken this long? And there is one image that keeps coming back to

me, and it's from my friend, the chairman of the committee, and it is

his favorite saying: There are a lot of Members who have been posing

for holy pictures over the last 100-plus days. The gentleman knows

exactly what I'm talking about.

Put yourself in the shoes of our men and women fighting in Iraq,

fighting in Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world. And think about

the message that we have sent them over the last 100-plus days. We sent

them there to do a job. We sent them there on a mission. And yet, for

the last three and a half months we had a debate going on here that has

undermined their efforts, lowered their morale and clearly sent the

wrong message to our allies and to our enemies. But thank goodness that

we're finally here.

We have no artificial deadlines. We have no surrender dates. We have

no shackles on the generals and our troops on the ground. We are going

to give our generals and our troops what they need to win in Iraq. And

winning in Iraq is important for our country. I don't believe that

there is a Member in this Chamber who doesn't understand that winning

in Iraq is important to our country. It has been difficult; mistakes

have been made. But think about why we went to Iraq. We went to Iraq to

get rid of a brutal dictator who was a threat to his own population and

to all of his neighbors. We succeeded.

We went to Iraq to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Of course

they were shipped somewhere else. But we know that they were used

against their own Iraqi people. But they are not there. We went there

to help install a government to build a basic democracy in a part of

the world that has never known it. We are in the midst of it, and we

are succeeding.

It is al Qaeda, the sworn enemy of the United States, who wants to

kill us, who made Iraq the central front in their war with us. If we

don't take on al Qaeda in Iraq and defeat them, where will we draw the

line? Will we draw the line when they go into Saudi Arabia? Will we

draw the line when they try to decimate Israel? Or are we going to wait

and draw the line when we are fighting the terrorists here in America?

Think once again about those young men and women in our military out

there doing their duty for us. We, the Congress of the United States,

authorized the President to go to Iraq and to do what I've just

outlined. We sent them there. And this last 100 days, we've questioned

whether in fact we really should have done it. I think it is far too

late. They are there. They are on the ground. They deserve our support.

And, finally, tonight they are going to get the resources they need to

try to win the battle in Iraq.

Now let me just say something about the rest of this bill, the second

part of this bill that has some $20 billion worth of additional

spending, probably some $8 or $9 billion of nonmilitary, nonveteran

spending that does not belong in this bill. It may be well-meaning. It

may be well-intentioned, but it doesn't deserve to be put on the backs

of our men and women in the military serving our country. It deserves

to be done in a regular order.

When it comes to that part of the bill, I am going to have to vote

``no.'' To load this bill up with not only all the additional spending,

but we've got a half a dozen pension issues. We've got a minimum wage

issue. We've got a whole host of other issues that don't deserve to be

put on the backs of our men and women in the military. It is a sneaky

way to do business. I wish it was not in there. And on that portion of

the bill, I will vote ``no'' tonight.

But I am glad that we're here. I know that there are differences in

this Chamber, Members on both sides of the aisle who feel differently

about our mission in Iraq and our chances of success there. I know when

I came here and every 2 years since I've been here, on the opening day,

we all stand here; we raise our right hands and swear to uphold and

defend the Constitution of the United States. There are a lot of my

colleagues that have heard me make the statement that I didn't come

here to be a Congressman. I came here to do something. And I think at

the top of our list is providing for the safety and security of the

American people. That's at the top of our list. After 3,000 of our

fellow citizens died at the hands of these terrorists, when are we

going to stand up and take them on? When are we going to defeat them?

Ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you, if we don't do it now, and if

we don't have the courage to defeat this enemy, we will long, long

regret it. So, thank you for the commitment to get the job done today.