Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this supplemental

appropriations bill today, but like many Americans who want to see an

end to the war in Iraq, I am not happy about it.

In fact, I am deeply frustrated and saddened by the prospect, but I

also am compelled by my conscience to this vote.

On Monday, Memorial Day ceremonies throughout Colorado and across the

country will honor the men and women in uniform who have paid the full

measure of devotion to duty in all of America's wars.

But as long as the war in Iraq goes on, every day will be Memorial

Day.

Already, more than 3,400 of our servicemen and servicewomen have died

in Iraq, and more will die before we withdraw our troops. Just last

Friday, for example, 33-year old SFC Scott Brown of Windsor, Colorado,

and 27-year old SGT Ryan Baum of Aurora, Colorado, were among them.

A friend of Ryan's family told reporters, ``Ryan never wanted to be

known as a hero, he just did his job.'' In fact, he did his job--and he

is a hero.

This is not a heroic day in Congress, but as his comrades are

faithful to their responsibilities, we must be faithful to ours.

And one of those responsibilities--even for those of us who have

opposed this war--is to support those brave comrades as they continue

to do what the President has ordered them to do.

And now, today, all of us in the Congress face a dilemma that I

foresaw 4 years ago--when President Bush first sent our forces into

Iraq: having to choose either to take the guns out of the hands of our

soldiers in the field or to let the President move forward with a

misguided and reckless policy.

Cutting off funds for supplies and equipment for our troops is one

way, of course, to bring this war to an end, and I understand why many

Americans believe Congress should do so. But the more responsible way

to end this war, in my opinion, is to change our policy, and to avoid

making an already bad situation worse.

I opposed the Bush administration's decision to launch a pre-emptive

war in Iraq because I believed it would be a diversion from our larger

post 9-11 strategic objectives and I was not convinced that the

President had an adequate plan and enough international support to

secure and stabilize Iraq after overthrowing its regime.

I said at the time that getting into this war would be far easier

than getting out. I wrote in March, 2003 that ``success in Iraq is not

just about eliminating Saddam Hussein. . . . Success in Iraq also means

managing the ensuing social chaos, keeping a lid on the Middle East

powder keg, thwarting terrorist attacks at home, and occupying and

rebuilding Iraq--and doing all of this when our own economy is

faltering, energy prices are rising and domestic priorities like health

care and education are crying out for attention.''

So, I offered my own resolution to slow the rush to war in 2003 and

argued for a program of coercive inspections that would have uncovered

the truth about weapons of mass destruction before shedding American

blood.

When that was rejected, I voted against authorizing the President to

send our forces into Iraq--and today, more than ever, I am convinced

that my vote against the war was the right vote.

Congress, nevertheless, voted to give the President the authority to

go to war, and he has used that authority, to disastrous effect.

I have worked to extricate us from the ongoing disaster. I was among

the first in Congress to call for an exit strategy from Iraq. I have

introduced legislation, cosponsored legislation, spoken out with my

colleagues, published articles, traveled to Iraq to better understand

the challenges we face, and asked tough questions of our military

leaders during Armed Services Committee hearings. And I continue--every

day--to pressure this administration in every way I can.

I firmly believe that our challenge is to withdraw from Iraq

rapidly--but responsibly. For me, the debate today should be about how

to carry out a responsible withdrawal. And that is the point on which I

find myself disagreeing with many whose passion to end this war I

respect.

They argue that the best way to get out is to vote today to cut off

funding for our men and women in uniform, and in harm's way. I

respectfully disagree, because that would sacrifice a responsible exit

in favor of a rapid one--and in good conscience, I cannot support that

anymore than I could support the reckless way we were led into this war

in the first place.

I think responsibility demands that we provide the funding necessary

to keep the many thousands of brave Americans now in service in Iraq

supplied. With our troops stretched thin, forced to perform longer

tours of duty and short of equipment and supplies, funding for the

immediate needs of these men and women in uniform cannot be held

hostage to disagreements about the folly of Bush administration

policies.

Make no mistake--I have no doubt that the President's policies have

brought our country to the brink of a national security crisis. I am

angry that the President still refuses to accept a supplemental funding

proposal for Iraq and Afghanistan that provides real accountability

measures for ending the Iraq war. I voted to force him to adopt a

different course, and when he vetoed that legislation, I voted to

override that shortsighted and stubborn exercise of Presidential power.

Unfortunately, and primarily because of the misguided loyalty of

members of the President's party, that override effort failed, which is

why we are considering the legislation now before us.

I did not choose the wording of the bill that we are considering

today. It is not the bill that I would have written. But it will

provide the essential funding to support and protect America's sons and

daughters who are in Iraq right now doing everything we have asked of

them and putting their lives on the line every day.

But another part is to bring pressure to bear on this administration

to end this war because I don't want any more young dedicated Americans

to lose their lives in this war. I want to bring them home.

So far, that pressure has not been enough, as was shown by the

President's veto of a bill that fully funded our troops, held the Iraqi

government accountable, and demanded that the

President change course and bring the war in Iraq to a responsible end.

It is abundantly clear that he is not prepared to adopt a better

course--and as long as we lack a sufficient majority to override his

veto, we Democrats can't force him to do so without Republican support.

But I will persist, because I think it is up to those of us who

opposed this war in the first place to show the way forward.

That is why, after the Memorial Day recess I will introduce

legislation that implements the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group

and provides a foundation for the phased withdrawal of American troops

out of Iraq beginning in March of next year. So far over 40 Members of

Congress--both Democrats and Republicans--have agreed to cosponsor this

legislation.

I am hopeful that this bipartisan effort will lead to more such

efforts. Republicans and Democrats alike believe that this fall is key

to the future of U.S. military involvement in Iraq. By then, another

funding package will be up for a vote, General Petraeus will be

reporting back on the progress of the ``surge,'' and we will have other

indications of progress on benchmarks based on reports that the

administration will be forced to produce as part of this supplemental

funding bill.

I commit to continuing to do what I can every day to bring this war

to an end. Today, I believe the responsible thing to do is to provide

needed funds for our men and women in uniform with this bill, which

also includes benchmarks for the Iraqi government--an indispensable

step toward having Iraqis begin to take responsibility for their own

country's future.