Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the first

amendment before us, and in strong opposition to the second.

It is unfortunate that we have come to this point today. This House

has already passed two supplemental war funding bills that would set in

motion the change of course in Iraq that the American people have

demanded of us. The first was vetoed by the President; the second

failed in the Senate. Last week, Democratic leaders met with the

President and offered to drop all domestic items in the supplemental if

the administration would accept meaningful benchmarks and timelines for

ending our involvement in that civil war. He refused.

We are now left with the Senate-passed plan, which gives the

President the funds he requested, accompanied by a much weaker set of

benchmarks than those passed by the House. Some have cited the

inclusion of these benchmarks as a step toward ending 6 years of

Congressional blank checks for the President's war. While these

benchmarks may be a step in the right direction, they are too small of

a step. I will vote against the second amendment we are considering

today.

However, I will support amendment No. 1 to the Senate amendment to

H.R. 2206. This measure will provide emergency funding to address

critical needs here at home. It includes additional funding for the

State Children's Health Insurance Program to prevent many thousands of

poor children and some of their parents from losing health coverage, as

well as increased spending for Gulf Coast hurricane recovery. It also

provides more funding for our veterans' health needs, with additional

funding set aside specifically to address traumatic brain injury, one

of the most common and devastating injuries our soldiers are suffering

in Iraq. The amendment also codifies the raise in the minimum wage that

the House originally passed during the First 100 Hours of the 110th

Congress. The value of the minimum wage is at its lowest level in more

than 30 years, and raising it will provide much-needed help to many of

America's financially-strapped working families.

I find it unconscionable that the President and some Congressional

Republicans have derided these provisions as ``pork.'' Each of these

issues is an emergency in its own right and rises to the level of

inclusion in this emergency spending bill. I am proud to support them.

In September, as these funds expire, the Congress will once again

have to decide what course of action to take on this war. The rule we

passed for consideration of this bill requires that before we vote on

another supplemental bill in the fall, we must vote on whether the

funds appropriated therein be limited to the safe redeployment of our

troops on a responsible timetable. It is my hope that when these votes

occur in September, many more of my colleagues on the other side of the

aisle will have come to their senses and realized that the civil war in

Iraq cannot be ended by further American military involvement. I am

confident that if the American people continue to voice their strong

opposition to the President's failed policy in Iraq, enough Republicans

will join with us to override future vetoes and end this misbegotten

war.