Mr. Speaker, I have and will always support our troops.

I have grieved with their families when they have fallen in battle. I

have visited them in the hospitals and watched as they recover from

some of the most devastating injuries any human could endure. As a

member of the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs Appropriations

Subcommittee, I joined my colleagues earlier this week in passing the

largest increase in veterans' health care funding in 77 years. I want

our soldiers and marines in Iraq and Afghanistan to never doubt that

their country values their sacrifices and will always be there for them

and their families, whether in battle or when they come home.

This bill, however, does not honor nor protect our troops. Without

accountability and a clear change in policy, this bill simply becomes

another blank check for President Bush to continue waging this war

without regard to reality or the demands of the American people. The

Congress has an obligation to provide our troops with the funding they

need to succeed, but it is under no obligation to support a policy that

leaves our troops trapped in the cross fire of a civil war.

This Administration's disregard for the reality in Iraq, for what a

clear majority of Americans now demand, and what is in the best

interest of our long-term national security has gone on for too long.

This is a vote to make clear that the Congress will not sit idly by as

more American soldiers and marines are sucked into the quagmire of

Iraq. It is long since past time to begin bringing our troops home.

American blood cannot be a substitute for Iraqi political will.

The Administration's mishandling of the war in Iraq has brought us to

this point, and the Administration's determination to save face at all

costs has again denied our troops a policy that takes full measure of

the sacrifices they have made.

I cast this vote with a heavy heart. The White House has been playing

a reckless game of ``chicken'' when it comes to our troops, but neither

the Congress nor the White House will ever bear the true burden. Our

troops and their families shoulder the true grief and pain of

suffering.

The Administration has been served notice. It's my hope that this is

only the beginning of Congressional efforts to force the Administration

to face reality.