Mr. Speaker, today we are asked to vote

for a fourth time in 2 months on legislation to provide funding for the

ongoing military mission in Iraq.

The tally of this vote will reflect the dilemma facing this Congress

as well as the American people. We are torn by two deeply held

sentiments: on the one hand, we support our troops and want to make

sure they are protected and supported in the field of battle; on the

other hand, we are frustrated by a failed war policy and a President

too stubborn to change course.

I voted against giving the President the authority to wage war in

Iraq. I have introduced legislation to place a termination date on that

authorization and to require the President to formulate and execute an

exit strategy. But I have consistently voted for bills to fund the war

effort because that funding is essential to our troops in the field.

Over the last 2 months alone, I have voted three times for funding for

the troops in different versions of a supplemental appropriations bill.

But I will not vote yes today.

In addition to funding troop needs, the previous versions of the

bill--despite differences among them and the compromises they

contained--would have made substantial progress toward bringing this

war to an end. The legislation before us today takes some modest steps

forward by including benchmarks for progress for the first time and

requiring the administration to report on whether its strategy is

achieving them. Unfortunately, however, it does not advance us nearly

far enough toward ending this war and putting Iraqis in charge of their

own governance and defense.

The progress the bill does make has been the result of the pressure

brought to bear by

the prior supplemental votes. I will be voting against this bill as a

way of helping maintain and increase that pressure.

Let no one mistake the significance of the vote we take today. This

fourth vote is not primarily about material support for the troops--

every Member of this body supports our troops. This vote is

fundamentally about the future of our policy in Iraq.

Even if this bill were to fail today, the result would not be a cut-

off of funding for the troops. The result would be to force the

administration to give ground it should have given long ago, and that,

sooner or later, I believe it will be forced to give by this Congress.

There is nothing about our military strategy that can solve what are

fundamentally political and sectarian conflicts among Iraqis. Military

and intelligence leaders have consistently declared that the solution

in Iraq will be political and diplomatic in nature, not military. We

have increasingly asked the military to work toward goals that military

force cannot achieve: political agreements between intransigent Iraqi

leaders, equitable sharing of power and resources, and an end to

sectarian-based civil war. In the meantime, our presence has become a

provocation for insurgency and a magnet for international terrorism.

We have, in short, left our troops in an impossible situation. I am

not willing to vote to fund their operations without at the same time

compelling a change in policy that will bring them home.

The struggle to change the U.S. course in Iraq is not over. The

American people are speaking loudly and clearly. Our efforts over the

last 2 months have moved the debate in the right direction, and we will

continue exerting pressure on the administration to alter its course in

the days and weeks to come as we consider other legislation related to

the war. In fact, it should not escape notice that we also passed today

a resolution requiring consideration of legislation in September that

would require an end to the occupation of Iraq.

Our goal in considering the President's supplemental appropriations

request was to confront the President over his failed policy and to

force a change in course. Even as this supplemental legislation likely

passes into law, we can be confident that we have taken important steps

toward this goal. We have demonstrated to the administration that it

can no longer proceed with its failed policy unaccountably. While many

in the House and the other body, where the power of filibuster can be

used to obstruct progress, have resisted efforts to craft a more

effective Iraq policy, the President and his allies in Congress have

been put on notice that the tide is turning.

I regret that this bill will not immediately bring the change to our

Iraq policy that we so desperately need. But it does represent one more

turn of the screw. The President should recognize that a growing number

of Members of this Congress, and a clear majority of the American

people, will continue boring deeper toward the heart of his failed

policy. And we will not stop pressing until our troops begin to come

home.