Madam Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I come to

the floor today to debate funding for President Bush's war in Iraq, yet

again, as more innocent Americans and Iraqis fall victim to a horrible

and debilitating violence that has not only torn Iraq apart, but

threatens the stability of the entire Middle East.

We should not be having this debate at all, because the President

should have changed course long ago. The President has had so many

opportunities to reevaluate his policies in Iraq that his failure to do

so can only be explained by an absolute unwillingness to admit that he

has made a grave mistake. He continues to act as if nothing is wrong,

even as Baghdad burns and the body count of dead Iraqi civilians and

dead American troops continues to rise. He continues to send more

troops to Iraq even as the Army, Marines, and National Guard are all

straining to the breaking point. He continues to ignore the will of the

American people who want an end to this war, even as public opinion

turns ever more decisively against his failed war policy

Madam Speaker, it is far past time for a new direction in Iraq. The

American people do not want to be there, and the Iraqis do not want to

have us there. Only the President and his dwindling cadre of head-in-

the-sand advisors believe that the United States is on the right course

in Iraq.

I am tremendously disappointed that the President, in the face of the

utter collapse of his policies in Iraq, refuses to change course. I

supported the first supplemental bill we passed this year for a simple

reason: It contained language to force an end to this disastrous war.

But in his legendary stubbornness and his inability to see reason, the

President vetoed that bill. I also supported the House version of the

second supplemental appropriations bill, because that bill established

strict benchmarks for progress by the Iraqi Government and military and

required the President to certify that progress to the Congress, or

else face a cutoff of funds to pursue the war.

But the supplemental that we will vote on today does not require the

troops to come home, and does not establish strict benchmarks to ensure

accountability, and for these reasons I will oppose it. But today's

vote does not end the effort in Congress to end the war. There will be

future votes, and I believe that as the public continues to make its

opposition to this war clear, there will be continued pressure on the

White House and on congressional Republicans to change course. We will

end this war eventually, but today I must oppose this appropriations

bill because it fails to take the steps needed to advance the goal of

bringing our valiant troops home.