Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 6 minutes. Let me start by

saying what is not in this bill. There is no money in this bill for

agriculture, there is no money for western wildfires, there is no money

for western schools. All of that will be in the next bill, which will

be considered separately.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is our response to the President's request for

$100 billion in additional funding for the civil war in Iraq, after he

vetoed the Congress's first attempt to deal with that problem.

What the bill does is to provide roughly $40 billion in funds that

are needed for the troops. We provide $30.5 billion for operations in

Iraq and Afghanistan. We provide additional funding for training of

Afghan and Iraqi soldiers.

We provide $3.5 billion for defense health, a number of these items

we are providing the President has not asked for. We are providing, for

instance, for the full $3.1 billion for base realignment. That is money

which he asked for last year, but not in this bill.

We are also asking for $1.8 billion for veterans health care, which

he did not ask for. We are asking for $2.2 billion for homeland

security to strengthen our ports, our border and our cargo security.

We are providing $660 million to defend this country against the flu

pandemic, which could kill many more Americans than have died in Iraq

if we get hit with that flu. This is money the administration itself

asked for 2 years ago.

We are also, in addition to that, asking to finish a number of jobs

left over from the last Congress. We are asking to finish the

construction, the job of cleaning up the mess after Hurricane Katrina.

We are also trying to restore 40 percent of the cut that the previous

Congress, last year, made in the Low-Income Heating Assistance Program

in light of the higher energy prices that are rising every day. And we

are providing, roughly $400 million in order to keep some of America's

poorest kids from losing their access to health care.

In addition to that, we are fencing the remaining funds that the

President has asked for, for Iraq, and we are fencing that money, just

as we did in 1984 when the MX missile issue was in dispute. And that

money is being held until the President issues three reports.

By July 13, he needs to issue a report defining the progress Iraq is

making in meeting the benchmarks which the President himself laid out

several months ago.

And we also ask him to submit a second report outlining whether or

not any of those benchmarks have actually been achieved.

And then, in addition to that, we are requiring a monthly report on

the combat-ready status of Iraqi military units.

When the Congress receives those reports, it will then have about a

week and a half before it has to consider, under expedited procedures

provided in this bill, it would have to consider, essentially, two

questions.

The pending question before the House would be whether or not the

remaining funds should be released so that the President, essentially,

gets all of his money with no strings.

The second proposition to be voted on is whether or not that money

should instead be used to simply reposition our troops out of a combat

role in Iraq.

We make certain exceptions, the same exceptions that we had in the

bill the last time it was before the House. And I would simply say, Mr.

Speaker, that I think we guarantee that the administration has a fair,

clean shot at getting the result it wants; and I think those in this

Chamber who want a different result and want to see a new policy in

Iraq, will get a clean shot at their preference.

What we are, in essence, doing is giving the President about 60 more

days to make his case before those votes occur. I think that is

eminently fair to him, and I think it is eminently fair to those of us

in the Congress who disagree with his position.

We are trying to find a way to reach a final decision on these

matters, even though many of us in this body very strongly disagree

with the President's package. With this package, we will have

compromised, now, on three very major items. We will have compromised

on the initial Murtha principles with respect to military unit

readiness by providing a waiver for the President.

We have also compromised with respect to the time line, because we

have kept in our national bill that he vetoed, we retained the initial

date by which troop repositioning was supposed to begin. But the final

close-out date was left very much an open-ended affair. That was a huge

concession to the White House.

And now, in a third concession, we are offering a way for the

President to get the rest of his money. All he has to do is issue these

three reports and then go to the Congress and try to persuade the

Congress that his case is better than those who have a different view.

That is a straight, fair way to deal with the problem.

And I would urge a ``yes'' vote.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, it is not the majority party that is in a hole. It is

the U.S. policy toward Iraq that is in a hole. It is not the majority

party that is in disarray. Last time I looked, the headlines said that

there was a bunch of Republicans going down to the White House

yesterday to tell the President that the jig is almost up on his Iraqi

policy.

The gentleman says we should fully fund the troops. We have provided

$4 billion more for the troops than the President asked for. We are

fully funding the troops. What we are not fully funding is a bankrupt

policy in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 1/2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman

from New York (Mr. Israel).

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

What the gentleman is telling the House is that he thinks his

accounting principles are more important than providing additional

veterans medical care. He is saying his accounting principles are more

important than providing the funding for base closure. He is saying his

accounting principles are more important than port security, cargo

security, and border security. He is saying his accounting principles

are more important than defending this country from a pandemic flu

epidemic. He is saying his accounting principles are more important

than providing a bunch of kids in this country with the health care

they need.

And then he squawks about the tunnel in the Capitol. The fact is what

we are doing is protecting workers who were exposed to life-threatening

asbestos. That is what we are doing.

So the gentleman may like the ad that we hear for the accounting

company. He may have a passion for accounting. I would much prefer if

he had a passion for people.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Let me simply point out to the gentleman that in the last session of

Congress, it took the Congress almost 110 days to respond to the

President's request. Let me also point out that the first 30 days of

this session were occupied because, while he was majority leader, we

never managed to pass a single domestic appropriation bill, and we had

to finish his unfinished business, which took the first 30 days of this

session.

Let me also point out that we have had two meetings with the

administration. We have laid out a number of compromises. I have laid

out, frankly, to the administration that we are pursuing a two-track

strategy. We asked them what concessions they would put on the table.

They still have not put a single concession on the table in their

conversations with us on this side of the Capitol. So absent that, we

have no choice to proceed except sit here like a bunch of potted palms

waiting for a miracle. Not many miracles on this House floor.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey

(Mr. Holt).

Mr. Speaker, if you remove the fencing, you remove all

pressure for policy change. That's the last thing we ought to want to

do. If you vote for this motion, it is an endorsement of the status

quo. I urge a ``no'' vote.