Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States had a

chance to fully fund the troops just a few weeks ago, he chose not to

take it, I tell my friend, Mr. Tiahrt, from Kansas. We fully funded the

troops. In fact, we gave more money for the fight against terrorism. We

want to see success.

Mr. Speaker, let every Member here and all those watching this debate

at home be perfectly clear, this legislation fully funds our troops in

harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan, ensuring that they have the

resources they need to conduct their missions. Not only that, this bill

includes additional funding, as the last bill did, not requested by the

President, to fight the war on terror, to improve America's military

readiness and to meet our veterans' unmet health needs.

However, while this legislation funds our troops, it insists, as we

tried to last time, for the first time in more than 4 years that the

Bush Administration and the Iraqi government be accountable. The

American public expects accountability.

Plain and simple, this legislation responds to the will of the

people, who are dismayed by the failed implementation of American

foreign policy, perhaps more failed than in any in the generation.

On Tuesday, a CNN poll found that two-thirds of Americans oppose the

war, and 61 percent support benchmarks like the ones in this bill that

would measure Iraqi progress.

Let me say to my friends on the other side of the aisle, Vice

President Cheney was deployed by this administration. What for? To tell

the Iraqis they had to perform, that they had to meet benchmarks; that

the American public was running thin on its support, and in fact is not

supporting this war.

But, frankly, the Congress has taken the position that we won't say

that, and the President vetoes a bill that said that, a bill that

required performance so that the millions that the American public, the

billions that the American public, the $500 billion-plus that the

American public has dug from their pockets, will be responsibly met by

the Iraqi Government.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, this legislation holds the President and the Iraqi

Government accountable by fencing off 52-plus of the $95.5 billion

provided to the Defense Department until released by subsequent

legislation.

What is there to fear from this Congress as we oversee whether or not

there is a turn from an unsuccessful implementation of a policy to a

successful policy? Perhaps that fear is that that corner will not be

turned, and therefore this vote may be at risk.

Before this additional funding is released, however, the President

must report to Congress by July 13 regarding the success of the Iraqi

Government in meeting security and political benchmarks. General

Petraeus has said there is no solution but a political solution, and

the only people who can accomplish a political solution are the Iraqis

themselves.

What do we ask for? Disarming militias who are killing our men and

women, enacting legislation to equitably share oil revenues. There will

be no resolution without that. Reforming the debaathification process,

which says to literally tens of thousands of people, we know you were

Baath members, but you really weren't in politics, so you can come back

and do the work to build this society. Without that, we will not

succeed and our men and women will pay the price, as they are paying

the price every day.

Lastly, providing for provisional elections. We are fighting for

democracy. We are investing in democracy. That is what we are told. But

we haven't amended the constitution and we are not providing for the

provincial elections that were promised. If that is the case, the Iraqi

people are not going to think democracy is on its way.

Mr. Speaker, the President of the United States himself has stated

that our commitment in Iraq is not open-ended. That is what this

legislation says. If you think it is open-ended, if you think there

should be no benchmarks, if you think the American taxpayers' money

ought to be spent without seeing results and without the carnage to our

troops decreasing, then vote against this.

To this we say, no more. No more blank checks. Not after more than

3,370 Americans have lost their lives in Iraq and more than 25,000 have

been injured. Ten percent of those lives have been lost in the last 4

months. Not after the American taxpayer spent nearly half a trillion

dollars. And not after 4 years of egregious misjudgments by this

administration, from ``mission accomplished,'' to ``the insurgency is

in its last throes,'' to ``Iraq will fund its own reconstruction.''

Every Member in this body, every Member, hopes and prays that the

current troop escalation succeeds, that the Iraqis stabilize and secure

their country and that our troops can return home safely. Why should

you fear waiting 60 days and making another judgment as to whether that

is occurring? That is our responsibility.

We swore an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States

which says that we are the policymakers. But there is little reason for

optimism when the violence in Iraq continues unabated and progress on

the ground is somewhere between illusive and nonexistent.

The two-step funding approach in this legislation effected by Mr.

Obey and Mr. Murtha is not only appropriate, it is imperative. Even the

Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell, has stated, ``I think the time

to look at where we are is late summer.'' This is a few days before

that, and we will continue consideration into that late summer that

Senator McConnell talks about.

We cannot want to succeed more than the Iraqis. They must take the

lead in restoring stability and securing their nation. And the Iraqi

Parliament must not go on vacation while American men and women are

fighting and dying for them.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, support this bill.

Let us forge a new direction in Iraq and implement a policy and design

to succeed.