Mr. Speaker, last week President Bush

marked the fourth anniversary his proclaimed ``Mission Accomplished''

in Iraq with a veto. He refused to heed the will of the American people

and disregarded the work of this Congress by vetoing the Iraq

Accountability Act that called for a new direction in Iraq.

Earlier tonight, I supported a bill offered by the gentleman from

Massachusetts, Mr. McGovern that would have provided for the

redeployment of U.S. Armed Forces and defense contractors from Iraq. I

have believed for some time now that we must begin the safe and

strategic withdrawal of our troops. While this measure was defeated, I

remain resolved we must change the current course in Iraq.

Before the House is a revised Iraq Accountability bill. This bill

continues to keep our commitment to our servicemen and women and to the

American people. It fully funds our troops, improves military readiness

and holds the Bush Administration and the Iraqi government accountable.

The bill would provide $95.5 billion to the Department of Defense, but

would fence off $52.8 billion, more than half of the funds. This

funding would be held by Congress until the Bush Administration

accounts for progress on the ground. President Bush would have to

report to Congress the progress of the Iraqi Government in meeting key

security benchmarks by July 13, 2007. Only with this accountability and

another vote by Congress would the remaining funds be appropriated.

The era of ``stay the course'' and blank checks without

accountability is over. I call upon my colleagues and the President to

search their conscience and join me in supporting the underlying bill--

a balanced and reasonable approach to Iraq.