Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that we could do as the distinguished

speaker has indicated and simply rubber-stamp what the administration

asks for and do nothing else. But the fact is, what we are doing is

exercising our responsibilities to provide checks and balances;

Congress has every right to limit the terms and conditions under which

appropriations are made, especially in wartime.

I would also point out that lest there be any doubt for the support

of the troops, in addition to all of the funding that Mr. Murtha has

put in his section of the bill to meet the everyday combat and

readiness needs of the troops, we have $1.7 billion above the

President's request for veterans health care; we have another $1.7

billion above the President's request for defense health care. I think

that makes quite clear that if you are concerned about the troops and

concerned about the veterans, you will vote for this bill.

I will now yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas

(Mr. Edwards).

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that at the end of the debate the closing

speech on the Republican side will be given by our good friend from

Texas Mr. Johnson. I think everyone in this place respects him and

loves him.

I must say that having gone through this for the last 3 weeks trying

to talk to each and every person who I could reach about this measure

has given me a profound respect for a good many Members of this

institution whom I had not known before, especially the newcomers.

The caucus that we had this morning was one of the most moving

experiences that I have ever felt in my 38 years in the Congress. I

heard Member after Member stand up and discuss this issue as a matter

of high principle; but they also discussed it in terms of what the

impact of their votes would be, not on themselves, but on the people of

this country, on the soldiers who are fighting in the field, on the

people in Iraq, and on our country's ability to influence the world.

This is a very tough issue. There are many considerations that each

of us brings to this judgment, but in the end, I think we have a

choice. As I said earlier today, we have a choice in determining what

kind of Congress this is going to be. We can continue the practices of

the past which rubberstamped virtually everything the President wanted

on Iraqi policy. We can continue to do what he wants and only what he

wants and only when he wants to do it and only in the way he wants to

do it; or we can do what our Founding Fathers envisioned when they

created the Congress. We can exercise checks and balances in order to

try to move policy into a more constructive direction for this country.

If you oppose this bill today, and if you take the position that all

it should contain is what the President sent down, then you would be

saying that you wanted to finance BRAC, the base-closing program, by

gutting key education programs as the President recommends. You would

be opposed to additional border security, additional port security and

additional cargo security.

You would be opposed to finally, after all of the horrendous pictures

and all of the horrendous human suffering, you would be opposed to

finally meeting our total obligations to the victims of Katrina.

You would be opposed to asking for the money which the President

himself asked that we provide in 2005 on an emergency basis to prepare

this country to meet the pandemic flu epidemic which will surely at

some time come.

You would be opposing the additional $3.5 million that we have

provided in this bill for veterans' health care and defense health

care, and you would be opposing the timelines and the benchmarks which

we place in this legislation, not because they are so perfect, but

because they are the instrument by which we communicate to the Iraqi

politicians that they must begin to resolve their differences, they

must step up, because we are not going to run our baby-sitting service

forever.

It is imperative that we finally send that signal. The President

cannot send that signal, but we can help General Petraeus. We can help our own

government by sending the signal that this Congress is going to play

bad cop until the Iraqis get the message.

That is what Mr. Murtha's efforts have been about, that is what mine

have been about, that's what the Speaker's efforts have been about, and

that's what the efforts have been about by virtually every person in

this caucus and this House who has had a say in what this bill was

going to contain.

I strongly urge an ``aye'' vote.

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

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

The gentleman is entitled to his own opinions; he is not entitled to

his own facts.

There is nothing in this bill whatsoever that has anything to do with

tropical fish, unless he thinks that Lake Erie is in the Tropics.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania

(Mr. Murtha), the chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.