Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this

bill as chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee,

advocating for the bill's acceleration of programs critical to the

integrity of our borders and the safety of the American people. These

are carefully crafted, legitimate emergency security measures, and

there is no good reason to wait further to make this country more

secure.

Today, however, I want to address the broader bill, speaking

colleague to colleague, mindful and respectful of the struggles with

conscience so evident among us in recent days.

I did not support originally giving the authority to the President to

wage war in Iraq. I have introduced legislation calling for an end to

that authorization. But I understand there is a wide range of opinion

on where we should go from here, and there are many who believe that

this bill, which takes a major step towards changing our course in

Iraq, either goes too far or not far enough.

Our discussions on this issue have brought to mind lessons from my

days in divinity school and as a teacher of ethics, lessons I believe

are helpful in sorting out what it means and should mean to follow

one's conscience on a matter such as this.

On the first day of Ethics 101, we learn that we often face two kinds

of moral choice in life. One has to do with the morality of an act

itself, which is what many colleagues are referring to when they say

they are ``voting their conscience'' on what we know is an imperfect

bill.

The second kind of moral choice requires us to consider the

consequences of our acts. That is also an exercise of conscience,

perhaps an even more demanding one.

Think about the consequences. What if the consequence of voting

``no'' is to let slip away the best chance we may have for a long time

to compel a change of course in Iraq? What if a consequence is the

further crippling of this House's influence in this country's foreign

and defense policy? What if the consequence of a ``no'' vote is to

allow the President to continue on the same failed policy course? Are

those not matters of conscience?

Some talk as though we should simply square the contents of this bill

against an ideal and vote accordingly. No, I am afraid moral choice and

our obligations as public servants run deeper than that.

Please, don't sell short a vote in favor of this bill as though it

were a mere practical or political accommodation. By all means, treat

this vote as an act of conscience, but an act based on a searching

consideration of the full range of consequences that may result.