Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591, the

Fiscal Year 2007 U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq

Accountability Supplemental Appropriations Act, because, in my opinion,

it sends the wrong message to our troops, our allies and the Iraqi

people, who really want to take care of and control of their own

country.

In my opinion, this bill will tie the hands of the commanders in the

field by micromanaging from Washington the military decisions that

those commanders ought to be making on the ground. Further, by setting

a date-certain timeline requirement for withdrawing our troops, in my

opinion it will endanger U.S. personnel and give our enemies a date to

wait us out.

Mr. Speaker, this bill not only sends the wrong message to our troops

about their efforts to bring stability to Iraq, it sends the wrong one

to our allies throughout the world. In my opinion, it says that if you

bloody us enough, we are going to walk away.

If we walk away, our credibility is gone in the world. We will be

abandoning the thousands of Iraqis who risked their lives and voted for

freedom, and risk bringing dishonor to the men and women who have

fought and died in this war.

One thing that strikes me about the debate of this bill and the

recent one on H. Res. 63, the Iraqi war resolution, is that there is

little or no discussion on what the Iraqis are willing to do to bring

themselves closer to taking control of their own country.

Earlier this year I went on a bipartisan congressional delegation

trip to Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. While we met with U.S. troops

and commanders, we also had a chance to meet with the leaders of those

countries, including Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki. He told us if his

country had the command and control, equipment and our backing, the

Iraqis could begin to take over their own security in 3 to 6 months and

that we could be able to redeploy 50,000 U.S. troops at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that President Maliki has the tools

and resources to be successful. For those who are looking for a timely

withdrawal of troops, why shouldn't we be focusing on giving him and

his plan a chance, rather than setting arbitrary withdrawal deadlines?

The quicker that the Iraqi people take control of their country, the

quicker U.S. troops can begin to withdraw with dignity. This bill, I

don't believe, moves us further in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to send our own message to the

leadership of this body that our troops and commanders in the field

deserve a bill that will support them in their efforts to bring

stability to Iraq.

Finally, I am troubled by the way the new majority has restricted the

debate, for even while we are encouraging the Iraqi people and their

leaders to become more democratic, the House of Representatives, in my

opinion, is moving in the opposite direction.

During the last elections, much was made about maintaining a fair and

open process in the people's House, and I shared that. Frankly, I don't

think we did when we were in the majority enough on that. This bill,

however, is back to even worse than that because it is being considered

under conditions that are neither fair nor open. Specifically, no

amendments are allowed, and no alternatives can be considered on this

most important bill.

Mr. Speaker, a bill with such historical importance needs to have

open and fair debate. That is the way this type of bill has always been

considered, I thought, before. That is what the American people were

promised last fall. I, frankly, deeply regret that this is not now

occurring today.