Mr. Speaker, so much has been said, and I think

we are very clear on the purpose of this bill and the importance of it

as far as the war in Iraq is concerned.

But there is another aspect to this bill. There are literally 2

million children who are without health care. I want to at this point

recognize and give due thanks and appreciation to Congressman John

Murtha. No State has suffered because of the CHIP program as the

children of Georgia's 273,000 children who would be without their

health insurance if it were not for this war supplemental.

When the issue was taken to the White House, he said no. All hope was

gone. I went to John Murtha, and John Murtha said, we will help you,

and we will attach it to the Iraqi war supplemental. And he took it to

Mr. Obey and to the Speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen, I make this plea to you, as the Scripture says

clearly, suffer not the little children. This is the only hope for

getting our insurance for our children in the SCHIP program. I urge you

to not let the children of the United States of America go down the

drain. Vote for the children of this Nation and for this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Murtha.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R.

1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans Health and Iraq Accountability

Act of 2007.

There is no doubt that the conflict in Iraq is now a civil war marked

primarily by sectarian violence, pitting Sunnis against Shias, with our

troops caught in between. This bill is in fact the most responsible

means to get our men and women out of this quagmire.

This legislation does not call for an immediate withdrawal. Instead,

the legislation gives Iraq's government a timeline to achieve political

and military progress, a timeline already set by President Bush and

Iraqi leaders. If Iraq's government fails to meet the benchmarks

outlined in the legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by March

2008. If the benchmarks are met by the deadlines established in the

legislation, U.S. forces must be redeployed by September 2008. In doing

this,

the legislation creates leverage that the U.S. can use to hold Iraq's

government accountable and make it ultimately responsible for creating

a political solution to this conflict that will result in American

troops coming home.

I acknowledge that Congress should generally avoid trying to micro-

manage a war. When decisions need to be made, there is no time for

committee hearings or floor votes; the Commander-in-Chief may need to

act immediately. However, this Administration, contrary to the facts of

the situation on the ground, continues to claim that success is around

the corner. The then-Republican Chairman of the Senate Armed Services

Committee stated that ``in two or three months if this thing hasn't

come to fruition and this level of violence is not under control'' then

we would need to rethink our policy--he made that statement six months

ago.

Some have suggested that any deadline is problematic. However, the

Administration's original time estimate for the war was `six days, six

weeks, no more than six months,' so a firm deadline 18 months from now,

after four years of this open ended conflict, cannot create any more

problems than we already have and in fact sets a date that we can begin

to bring our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, today's legislation, for the first time in the four year

history of this conflict, finally puts real pressure on the President

and Iraq's leaders to bring this war to an end. This bill will begin a

responsible process to remove our forces from Iraq.

Foreign Policy Experts Support H.R. 1591. Former National Security

Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski has stated that ``only a political solution

will end this war,'' and that the plan approved by the House today

provides ``a means to hold the Iraqi government accountable for its

performance by conditioning U.S. support to the meeting of benchmarks

already endorsed by President Bush and Iraqi leaders.''

Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright recently stated, ``the

bottom line is that there must be a political settlement in Iraq that

will end the civil war and reduce the level of insecurity to something

that can be managed. With a settlement, we could withdraw gradually,

with mission accomplished. Without a settlement, our troops can do

little good and might as well come home sooner rather than later.''

In a letter to House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey,

former Congressman, 9/11 Commissioner and co-chair of the Iraq Study

Group, Lee Hamilton said that ``a strategy of sustained pressure on the

Iraqi government to meet benchmarks on national reconciliation,

security, and improving the lives of the Iraqi people--backed by clear

conditionality of U.S. support--has the best chance of advancing

stability in Iraq.'' Congressman Hamilton added under the House

proposal, ``the President retains his flexibility and authority as

commander-in-chief.''

High Ranking Military Officials have questioned our current policy in

Iraq.

Former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Gen. Wesley Clark (Ret.),

former President of the National Defense University Lt Gen. Robert G.

Gard, Jr. (Ret.), former Deputy Commander of Multinational Force Iraq

Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, current Deputy Commander of Multinational

Force Iraq Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, and First Head of Training of

Troops in Iraq Maj. Gen Paul Eaton (Ret.), have all pointed out that

the solution in Iraq is primarily political, diplomatic and economic.

In an open letter to Congress, several retired generals and other

high ranking military officials stated that the situation in Iraq is

``grave and deteriorating'' and that top military officials have

``consistently acknowledged that the repeated and lengthy deployments

are straining'' the U.S. military.

General David Petraeus, the new Commander of Multinational Force

Iraq, recently declared that ``there is no military solution to a

problem like that in Iraq.''

I urge my colleagues to support the bill.