Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to

H.R. 1591. This is not an Emergency War Supplemental; it is the

Partisan Repayment Act. Indeed, this legislation is less about

supplying the troops than feeding the base.

There is desperate need for a new Iraq policy, and we should be using

this opportunity to have a serious discussion. It is unseemly, even

embarrassing, to use pork to buy support for bad policy on a bill as

important as this one. It makes us look as trifling and greedy as our

enemies claim. The well-being of our men and women in uniform is in the

balance, as is the future of the Middle East. If ever there was a time

to win on the strength of one's ideas, this is it.

I share the concerns of my colleagues regarding the progress of the

war, and I believe there is value in setting benchmarks. Ours should

not be an open-ended, unquestioning commitment to the Iraqis. They do

need to assume more responsibility for their own affairs. It is not the

job of our troops to referee partisan quarrels, nor is it our job to

baby-sit the Iraqi government.

It is foolish, however, to make such milestones public. It is even

more foolish to announce a date for withdrawal. Doing so gives the

enemy too much information and too many options.

It is also foolish to codify deadlines. Who's to say the Iraqi

government won't make a good faith effort to accomplish the tasks

required of them? It would be wise to allow them flexibility, not give

them a drop-dead date. We ourselves are working under a continuing

resolution because we could not pass more than two appropriations bills

last year. Our 5-day workweeks are often 4 days long--who are we to set

a deadline in statute?

There is a pressing need to formulate a new policy for Iraq. I am

disappointed the Democrats have yet to allow a serious debate on this,

the most important issue facing the Congress today. Rather, we have

wasted time with a non-binding resolution regarding tactics--not even

strategy. Now we send the Iraqis a laundry list of errands and a pre-

determined result.

Success in Iraq will require a broad based policy shift. The Iraq

Study Group report includes 79 recommendations covering all facets of

public policy--military, diplomatic, economic, and social. This report

should form the basis of a productive discussion. Unfortunately, the

Democratic leadership has opted for a hodge-podge of sound bites

masquerading as serious legislation. They have stifled debate rather

than encouraged it by refusing to allow any amendments.

Mr. Speaker, this is but the first act in the play. Our own

servicemen and women do need the funding this bill would provide. I am

confident once we get beyond this charade we will be able to craft

responsible legislation to give it to them.