Mr. Speaker, we began this week by solemnly marking the

fourth anniversary of the war in Iraq, the more than 3,200 brave

soldiers who have been killed there, and the 378 billion dollars that

have been appropriated thus far. But we end the week with the historic

opportunity to bring about an end to this catastrophe.

Over the last 4 years, the President not only failed to provide a

plan to win in Iraq, he failed to offer our troops concrete and

attainable objectives. Where he has let down our forces and the

American people, Congress has a Constitutional obligation to step in,

and this, ``The U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq

Accountability Act,'' is our chance. It is our only real chance, to see

this war end, to comply with the stated will of the American people,

and to bring our troops home.

It is important to remember that this bill does more than set

benchmarks and a timeline; it also provides much needed funding to

protect our troops abroad and care for our veterans at home. A vote

against this bill is a vote for the President but against our soldiers;

it supports the war but abandons our young men and women in uniform.

That being said, whether we authorize it or not, the President will

find the funding to prolong this war, even if it is at the expense of

our soldiers, our veterans, and other crucial programs. This country

cannot afford another Walter Reed, nor can it afford to send the

President another blank check to indefinitely extend this occupation.

The President has asked for a bill without strings attached. He

doesn't deserve a bill without strings. In 4 years of acting without

strings, this war has never had an end in sight. We have before us

today the opportunity to bring finality into view, and I urge my

colleagues, members of the Senate, and President Bush not to squander

this opportunity. I ask that we unite in support of Iraqi independence,

U.S. troops, and H.R. 1591.