Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1591, the

U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health and Iraq Accountability Act.

This legislation would make emergency supplemental appropriations for

the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007.

H.R. 1591 would provide funding for many purposes. This funding would

support our military personnel who are fighting our country's enemies.

This funding also would support our civilian personnel who are trying

to establish a lasting peace for beleaguered citizens of some of the

world's most troubled countries. Of particular note, this legislation

includes much needed funding for healthcare for wounded warriors who

have returned home, having given all but their lives in service to our

country.

Debate with respect to this legislation will focus on the war in

Iraq. Iraq is today's signature issue and it is also one of the most

divisive and complex ones before this Congress. The choices we make

regarding Iraq will establish a legacy for the United States that will

define our policy toward the Middle East region for a generation or

longer. For that reason, it is my hope that we, as an institution and,

indeed, as a country can agree upon a policy that protects our national

interests and those of our allies and supports those service members and

civilians--and their families--who so bravely serve our country today

in Iraq and elsewhere around the world.

It is true the government of Iraq must work to better fulfill its

obligation to govern from moderate positions, with uniformity, and with

regard to the rule of law. On January 31, 2007, I introduced H.R. 744,

the Iraq Policy Revitalization and Congressional Oversight Enhancement

Act. H.R. 744 would take a different approach to the challenge of

setting metrics to measure progress in Iraq and to define the terms for

completion of the mission in that country than what is called for in

H.R. 1591, the legislation that is currently before this body.

I am a member of the Committee on Armed Services and I have traveled

to Iraq eight times since taking office in 2003. These trips have

allowed me to observe our operations in Iraq and to personally speak

with our commanders, service members, and civilian personnel in the

field. I have also had the opportunity to speak with Iraqi leaders

during these visits. As a result, I have learned a great deal about the

accomplishments made in Iraq to date. I have also learned of the many

challenges that remain there.

I believe that an honest and open exchange of views on the substance

of what our country and our allies must achieve in Iraq in order to

complete Operation Iraqi Freedom is needed. Finding an achievable,

expeditious, and honorable way to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom

should be a primary goal for all of us. We owe this to those who have

sacrificed so much for this mission. But the situation in Iraq will not

yield a solution easily. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to find one. In

doing so, we will be helping shape in the best way possible the legacy

future generations of Americans will inherit and the one that we will

have to defend to history. Like it or not, the United States assumed a

moral obligation to bring order to Iraq when we, in a pre-emptive

manner, attacked that country four years ago this month. History will

judge us harshly if we act in a way that would abandon this obligation.

It is for this reason and others that I strongly support the funding

called for by this legislation that supports our wounded warriors who

are embarking on their long but hopeful roads to recovery, that

supports our service members who continue to pursue our enemies

worldwide, and that supports our civilian personnel who work to

stabilize and reconstruct countries that are now home to disturbing

violence and heartbreaking loss of life. I urge my colleagues to

support the funding called for by this legislation.