Mr. Speaker, today, I will vote in favor

of H.R. 1591, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq

Accountability Act of 2007 to fully fund our troops and end the war in

Iraq.

This legislation will fully fund the troops serving in Iraq. It is

imperative that they have the necessary equipment to conduct their

mission as safely and swiftly as possible.

Today's vote marks a major shift in the strategy for Iraq by imposing

real responsibility on the Iraqi government. President Bush outlined

several benchmarks for the Iraqi government in his January 10 address.

Unfortunately, there were no real consequences for the Iraqi government

if these benchmarks were not met. Today's vote put real pressure on

Prime Minister Maliki and the Iraqi government to meet these

benchmarks. If the Iraqis do not step up and take control of their own

security, U.S. forces will begin a phased redeployment as early as July

1, 2007. All U.S. troops must begin their redeployment by March 1,

2008, by which time, the Iraqis will have had ample opportunity to be

trained and take control of their situation.

The U.S. cannot remain in Iraq indefinitely. During the past 4 years,

the U.S. has suffered over 3,000 casualties and countless injuries

attempting to curb the violence in Iraq. The time has come for the

Iraqis to stand up and make a real investment in the security and

future of their nation.

I will continue to support our troops and ensure they are trained and

properly equipped for battle. But the course in Iraq must be changed,

and that change has begun today.