Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 1591,

the so-called U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq

Accountability Act of 2007.

That's what my Democratic colleagues are calling the bill. And while

I support the funding in the bill for troop readiness and veterans'

health care, I wonder why the bill's title ends with Iraq

Accountability. Why not mention hand-outs to dairy interests, spinach

farmers, citrus growers, or for storing peanuts? Yes, $74 million for

storing peanuts.

Why not mention the unrequested funding for fighting wildfires in the

west, or the doubling of so-called ``emergency'' funds for the long-

known and well planned Base Realignment and Closure effort--funding

that the new majority knew was needed, but wouldn't provide in the

continuing resolution just last month? Why not mention the increase in

the minimum wage or funding for asbestos abatement in the Capitol

contained in this alleged emergency wartime supplemental appropriations

bill?

``Clean'' is not a word I would use to describe this bill, which

includes more than $21 billion in spending that is completely unrelated

to troop readiness, veterans' health, or Iraq. Sure, I've heard of

Christmas in July, but Christmas in March? What happened to the other

party's promise to end business as usual? This bill is worse than

usual. As the editorial in USA Today put it yesterday, ``It's hard to

believe which is worse: leaders offering peanuts for a vote of this

magnitude, or members allowing their votes to be bought for peanuts.''

Don't get me wrong. I agree that Congress has a responsibility and an

obligation to ensure the Veterans Administration and the Department of

Defense have the resources necessary to care for our veterans from all

wars and our wounded soldiers returning from Iraq, Afghanistan, and

elsewhere.

I agree that Congress has a responsibility and an obligation to see

that American troops are ready and able to fulfill their mission.

That's why I am a cosponsor of a bill introduced by my distinguished

and decorated colleague from Texas, Mr. Johnson. H.R. 511 pledges,

``Congress will not cut off or restrict funding for units and members

of the Armed Forces that the Commander in Chief has deployed in harm's

way'' in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I also agree that we must do a better job holding the Iraqi

government accountable. For too long, we pursued an open-ended

commitment without well-defined goals and clear benchmarks for success.

That's why I am a cosponsor of legislation, H.R. 1062, that will hold

the Administration--and the Iraqi government--accountable in achieving

clear benchmarks.

It requires the President to report to Congress, every 30 days, on

the extent to which the Government of Iraq is moving forward on more

than a dozen fronts, from troop training and security to rebuilding,

reconciliation, international cooperation and enforcing the rule of

law.

It also requires progress reports on the implementation of strategies

that will prevent Iraqi territory from becoming a safe haven for

terrorist activities.

But the bill we are considering today goes beyond funding and

benchmarks and crosses a constitutional line that has long kept

Congress from micromanaging military and foreign affairs.

Instead of sweeping away bureaucratic obstacles to success, this bill

creates 435 new armchair generals.

Instead of giving General Petraeus and our diplomatic leaders the

flexibility to fulfill their mission, it saddles them with bureaucratic

requirements and arbitrary timetables.

Instead of ensuring that our troops in harm's way have the resources

and equipment they need, this bill uses our military men and women as

pawns in a dangerous political game.

Instead of giving our troops, the Iraqi people, and their fledgling

government one last chance, it gives them one last mandate--to retreat

in defeat.

As if the bill wasn't wasteful enough, it starts a perilous countdown

to a vacuum in leadership and security that threatens any prospect for

peace or stability in the Middle East for years to come. And it does a

great disservice to our men and women in uniform and their commanders

in the field who have already sacrificed so much for our freedom and

security and that of the Iraqi people. They deserve better.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this irresponsible bill.