Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, we entered the fifth year

of the war in Iraq. Throughout that this Congress has provided the

President with all the resources needed to wage this war. However, this

body failed to provide any of the oversight he needed. Today, this

Congress will correct that lack of oversight, while still providing our

troops the funding they need and our military leaders the flexibility

they require.

Today we say an open-ended commitment to this war is no longer

acceptable. We say that we will no longer grant the President a blank

check.

The war in Iraq has already lasted longer than World War I, World War

II, and the Civil War. Continuing this war in the same manner with no

accountability from the Administration or requirements on the Iraqi

government is unacceptable.

Today, we stand up for our men and women in uniform; we honor our

veterans, and we begin a new course to securing Iraq by passing H.R.

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

Accountability Act.

Passing this emergency funding guarantees our troops will have the

equipment and resources they need. This bill demands that our troops

are fully mission capable and meet the readiness standards set by the

Department of Defense before we send them to war. And this bill demands

the Iraqis get off the sidelines and begin fighting for their country.

The people of Western North Carolina sent me to Congress to ask the

tough questions and demand accountability on this war. I have attended

briefings at the White House and the Pentagon where I have been able to

ask those questions. I have spoken to generals and troops on the

ground, veterans and the families of those fighting. I have listened to

my constituents, and I have prayed. I am confident that supporting this

bill is the proper course of action. Soldiers support this bill.

Generals support this bill. Veterans support this bill. The families of

those fighting support this bill. A vote against this bill is a vote

against our troops.

I am confident that this bill is a step in the right direction

towards promoting a just and stable Iraq, and in bringing our nation

closer to the day when all of our troops can return home to the warm

welcome of a grateful Nation. May God bless our troops and their

families, and may God bless the United States of America.