Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here with Mr. Scott

tonight, to be a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, and to hear the

wonderful presentation by Mr. Cooper of Tennessee who does a tremendous

job in this Congress, and who is one of the real consciences of the

people here in Washington. Even though some of the news he has to

relate to us is not the best of news, the people of this country need

to hear the truth, and that is what Mr. Cooper so eloquently gives us

on a regular basis.

I very much enjoyed the opportunity to travel this past week with my

fellow members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and there are

several Blue Dogs who are represented on that very important task force

that we have to try to foster cooperation in a very important alliance

we have. The alliance that United States has with NATO and

the other 25 countries in NATO is extremely important to our national

security. I don't think people realize how important it is.

It was a pleasure to have an opportunity to travel with Mr. Scott, a

newly appointed member to that commission, and Ms. Bean from Illinois

who is also here with us tonight. I know she will have a few words to

say in a little while. She was with us on that trip.

You know, when we go abroad like that and we talk with our allies, we

talk about a lot of things. On this particular occasion, of course, the

subject continually came up of Iraq and Afghanistan. NATO is helping us

in Afghanistan. We of course in Iraq don't have as many allies as we do

in Afghanistan. Some of the countries in NATO have a different view

about Iraq than they do about Afghanistan, but we are proud to have

their help in Afghanistan. It is very, very important to us because

that is an engagement there I think that most of the American people

are united, that we have to have success, certainly in Afghanistan.

But whatever anybody thinks about that war or about the war in Iraq,

one thing I believe we can all agree upon is that the taxpayer money

that is being used for those efforts needs to be used accountably. It

needs to be accounted for. That certainly has not been the case.

We in the Blue Dog Coalition came out with a plan not too long ago, a

resolution that would require essentially accountability for the use of

that money, would make an effort to try to stop the war profiteering

that we believe is going on, certainly in Iraq. I hope we can set up a

commission in this government, very much like the Truman Commission of

World War II, which would look at the expenditure, would actually hold

this administration accountable for the expenditures in Iraq.

Now, the importance of that I think is pretty obvious for everybody.

Every dollar that we misspend or waste in Iraq is a dollar that cannot

be used efficiently to protect our troops, it cannot be used

efficiently to get the job done over there, and it is also money taken

away from needed programs and services right here in this country.

I don't need to mention all of those programs one by one. We all know

what they are, from education, health care, right on down the line. We

need those dollars, and those dollars need to be spent appropriately.

But we can even go so far, if you can believe this, to apply some of

that wasted money on the national debt. That is what the Blue Dogs talk

about all of the time, the national debt in this country.

Thank you, Mr. Scott. What those points bring to mind

is it is the least we can do. As representatives of the people of the

United States of America, I believe it is our job to spend their money

efficiently. It is right at the top of the list of the important

responsibilities that we have and that is what we are trying to do as

Blue Dogs.

Now I don't know about you, but I grew up going to church.

I suspect you did, too.

And during some of those church services, I would hear

time and time again about the notion of stewardship. Is that a word

that is familiar to you?

And that is what we are talking about here. We are

talking plain and simple about stewardship, are we going to be good

stewards of our country. All we have got is our country and the money,

the hard work that our citizens do and the money that they contribute

to our national government. The least we can do is make sure that the

Federal Government spends it properly.

I am concerned about this debt: $8.7 trillion. And what really is

amazing is what Mr. Cooper told us a little earlier tonight, that not

only is the debt $8.7 trillion, this is the debt that the government

insiders are familiar with. The public I don't think is really aware of

how dramatically large this debt is. But what Mr. Cooper told us was

that this doesn't even warm it up. The real debt is more in the

neighborhood of $50 trillion.

The $50 trillion figure comes directly from this

administration. What is unfortunate is that this administration has

been a large part of the reason that the debt is that high. It is

terribly unfortunate. One figure that I saw not too long ago, and you

talked about it a little earlier, about our interrelatedness to China,

well, we have that connection with many countries all over the world in

one way or another, but the number that troubles me is the fact that

the Bush administration has borrowed more money from foreign

governments in the 6 years that this administration has been in office

than all 42 previous administrations combined.

Now, Mr. Scott, I don't know about you, but that is one of the more

astonishing figures that I have been privy to since I have been in the

United States Congress. I am shocked about that.

What I hope we can accomplish as we go forward, and certainly in the

effort that we are making tonight, is bring to light a little bit to

the American people what kind of financial situation we have in this

country and that we have got to get our act together. It is high time

that we behave accountably to the American people, that we hold this

administration accountable for how they have spent the money. That is

what the Blue Dogs want to do. That is why I am proud to be a Blue Dog

and proud to be here tonight.

I am just going to say one more thing and then allow

some of my other fine colleagues to have a word on this subject.

When I get ready to tell some of my constituents the nature of this

spending problem and particularly the point about this administration

borrowing more in 6 years than our country has borrowed in the entirety

of its history previous to these 6 years, I advise them to please sit

down before they hear this information because they are not going to

believe it. It is that extraordinary. I can't believe it. I still can't

really get my arms around the fact that we are doing that.

I think one of the most important points is, when you borrow to that

extent and when you get yourself in debt to that extent, it makes you

less secure. We are looking for security in this country. That is what

the American people want. When you are deeply in debt, I would submit

to you that you are, in fact, less secure, and that is what we are

getting in this country.

I thank you for the time.