I thank the gentleman from Georgia for yielding. It is

always an honor to join you here on the floor as it was an honor to

join you during the NATO parliamentary assembly that we attended

together. And one thing that didn't come up that you mentioned earlier

with Congressman Chandler was that, in addition to visiting NATO

headquarters in Brussels, we also visited the Landstuhl Medical

Facility in Germany where our returning wounded are coming from both

Iraq and Afghanistan. And it was important to meet with them and hear

from them their firsthand experiences and what brought them there, why

they are fighting so hard, and their concern for those in the platoons

that are still fighting. And one of the things I wanted to talk about

is bringing some accountability to that process.

And I will also mention that there has been a lot in the press

recently about Walter Reed and some concerns about infrastructure and

investment that I know we are working to address as we look at

appropriations. But it was encouraging to see the medical

professionals, their commitment to facilities and just the top-notch

care that our returning men and women who have been wounded are getting

and hear how pleased they were with the level of medical support they

are getting.

But the Iraqi War Cost Accountability Resolution which we in the Blue

Dogs introduced is what I wanted to touch on, because several of my

Blue Dog colleagues and yourself, Mr. Scott, have mentioned

accountability, and I think it certainly what our constituents expect

of us. And one of the reasons we supported this bill is it provides

accountability across four different disciplines. It provides spending

accountability; it enforces transparency, and requires the Department

of Defense Inspector General to provide regular reports on exactly what

spending has taken place, what spending hasn't taken place, what

projects we are working on, what the status of those projects are, what

the contracting process is. And also, not just what we in this country

are providing, but also what are other countries that are allied with

us are providing to what is going on there as well. It provides

contracting accountability in addition to spending accountability, with

a commission akin to the Truman Commission that was done in the past to

oversee the contracting process, the policies, how they are being

carried out, and whether those contractors are fulfilling their

obligations as well. And it also puts sanctions in place for any kinds

of fraud or abuse that can be happening.

It also provides budget accountability. As you and I know, and we

have talked about this in our Blue Dog meetings, there have been six

emergency supplementals, and those emergency supplementals have all

been for war spending. Given the number of years we have all been

engaged in this process in Iraq, it is no longer an emergency. This is

an unaccounted for spending; this isn't something that we are surprised

by. And so what we are requiring in this bill is on budget war

appropriations. And it also requires Iraqi accountability. So let me go

through all four of those, and then I will describe what I mean by the

Iraqi accountability.

Spending accountability, contracting accountability, budgeting

accountability, and Iraqi accountability.

And that means that we need to hold accountable not only the Prime

Minister al-Maliki, but the Iraqi government, to be accountable first

and foremost to protecting themselves on a sovereign basis. And as you

alluded to earlier, it is our job to help contain the situation from

insurgents outside, but they need to, for their own security, be first

and foremost in assuming a higher degree of responsibility, as many of

us supported the President when he said, as the Iraqi people and the

Iraqi military stand up, we can stand down. And so we have to hold them

accountable to doing that so we can.

I am going to lastly talk about the budget in general and why I am a

Blue Dog. You have your sign up there, we all do, and it talks about

the $9 trillion of debt that we are now at. And I think Congressman

Cooper alluded to the fact that the foreign borrowing that we are doing

is contributing to that. We are now borrowing, as a Nation, $7 billion

to $8 billion per working day from foreign countries; $2 billion to $3

billion of that is just the government alone. And at that rate, we are

going to continue to exacerbate this debt and the individual share that

we are passing on to every American.

I think, as a parent, I often remind myself that tough love is

important. It is not my job as a parent to tell my kids what they want

to hear, but to tell them what they need to hear. And I think the Blue

Dogs bring that same kind of tough love to our constituents and to our

Nation, and hopefully to our Congress, because we need to be talking

about what Americans need to hear, not what they want to hear. And so I

am glad to be joining you tonight.

Absolutely.

Very much so.

Absolutely we do.

Our entire Nation.

I would agree. Our entire Nation is grateful to them, and

to their families who were there supporting them through their

injuries.

And on that note I will yield back, because I know we have

Congresswoman Sanchez, who is also anxious to speak.