Mr. Speaker, on January 23 of this year, the President

in his State of the Union address said, ``This is not the fight we

entered in Iraq, but it is the fight we are in.''

Nearly 4 years after President Bush took us to war, 4 years, that is

longer than our involvement in World War II, it is fair to say that

this is not the debate we expected to have, but it is the debate we

must have. We owe it to our troops who have fought honorably and

valiantly, and we owe it to the American people.

More than 3,100 American soldiers dead, more than 23,000 American

soldiers injured, $500 billion in costs, 14,000 weapons that our Nation

bought for the Iraqi Army missing, $9 billion in reconstruction funds

missing. Mr. Speaker, stay-the-course has failed, and sending 20,000

more troops is no more than stay-the-course on steroids.

The American people would know this had the previous Republican

Congresses exercised their oversight responsibilities to tell the

American people what was going on. They would have known, for example,

that we have already tried three previous troop surges. In each case,

between 17,000 to 21,000 troops. Have we seen the improvement? What are

things like today? Where were the hearings to find out how those troop

surges went? Where are the reports? Mr. Speaker, this is a debate long

overdue.

The truth is, Iraqis must take responsibility for their own future.

When General John Abizaid met with commanders on the ground in Iraq, he

was asked, ``If we get more troops, will we succeed?'' And here is what

he told them: ``They all said no. And the reason is because we want the

Iraqis to do more. It is easy for the Iraqis to rely upon us to do this

work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing

more, from taking

more responsibility for their own future.'' That, General Abizaid said

on November 15, 2006.

U.S. troops are sitting today in the crossfire of a civil war. We

have no guarantee that an Iraqi Shi'a soldier will defend an Iraqi

Sunni civilian and that an Iraqi Sunni soldier will defend an Iraqi

Shi'a civilian. Iraqis must decide what future they want. Only Iraqis

can save Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, we need to redeploy our troops responsibly, to continue

training Iraqi soldiers, and to refocus our efforts on

counterterrorism. And we need a surge in diplomacy, not troops.

The consequences of stay-the-course are real. Just yesterday,

President Bush exhorted our allies to help us, not in Iraq, in

Afghanistan. The U.S. is sending more troops and billions of dollars

more. His words were telling yesterday. Quote, ``The Taliban and al

Qaeda are preparing to launch new attacks.'' New attacks. ``Our

strategy is not to be on the defensive but to go on the offensive.''

1,985 days since the 9/11 attacks, and Usama bin Laden remains free,

and we hope to go on the offensive in Afghanistan.

Americans deserve to hear the truth and the consequences, not

slogans. ``Mission accomplished'' wasn't true. ``Stay the course''

didn't work. And this new Congress will not be paralyzed by those who

argue that we must stay the course in Iraq to support the troops. The

troops didn't chart this course, the troops didn't ask to be plunged

into the middle of a civil war, and the troops didn't under-man and

under-equip.

It is time that the buck for the debacle in Iraq stops where it

belongs: Here in Washington, D.C. And if the President won't accept

that reality, then guess what? This new Congress, this new Democratic

leadership is prepared to stop the buck here.

This is a debate we must have. This is a debate about us. Us, those

of us here in this Chamber. Will we lead? Will we be responsible

overseers of this war? Will we heed the call of the American people?

Today, with this vote, Mr. Speaker, we will tell our troops, our

generals, our beloved people: We hear you loud and clear. It is time

for a new direction in Iraq.