Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Ms. Waters for her

leadership on the Out of Iraq Caucus and for her words here today. I

want to thank all of my colleagues for participating in this Special

Order this evening.

We are all here because we love this country, and we are all here

because we are outraged by the Bush policy in Iraq. We believe our

country is much better than what is on display in Iraq today. We want

to change the policies of this country to make our country better, to

make it reflect what this country really is all about, the finest and

the best traditions of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, on November 7, George Bush lost the election. The

American people made it very clear that they wanted a change in

direction in Iraq. That election was about Iraq, and the American

people all across this country made it clear that they want a change in

direction.

Last night the President of the United States gave a speech, and he

made it clear that he doesn't care what the people of this country

believe. He is ignoring the message and the statement of the mid-term

elections.

You know, I had hoped, notwithstanding all of the media hype leading

up to the President's speech last night, I was hoping maybe, just maybe

he was going to do the right thing. That instead of announcing tens of

thousands of more American troops in Iraq, that he was going to

announce that he was going to withdraw tens of thousands of American

troops from Iraq and begin the U.S. withdrawal and begin the end of the

U.S. occupation of Iraq. He did not do that.

So what do you do, Mr. Speaker? What do you do when you have a

President of the United States who ignores the advice of his generals

and military leaders who all told him that an escalation of U.S. forces

was a bad idea? What do you do, Mr. Speaker, when you have a President

of the United States who ignores the work of the bipartisan Iraq Study

Group?

The group's report by all accounts says our policy in Iraq has been a

failure, and it suggested that we find a way out. What do you do when

you have a President of the United States who ignores that? What do you

do when you have a President of the United States who ignores the will

of the American people, who ignores the election last November 7? What

do you, Mr. Speaker?

Well, all of us here have expressed our concern and our outrage over

this policy, most of us since before the war again. But what do you do

now? We can give more speeches, which we have been doing. We are

sending more letters and issuing more press releases.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you have a President of the United States who

is behaving as arrogantly as this President is with regard to this war,

then Congress must take action. Congress must condition funding.

Congress must withhold funding. Congress must cut funding if that is

what it takes to end this war.

Now, there are those who say if you do that, you are going to

shortchange our troops. I hear that from the Bush administration and

from some colleagues here in this Congress. Let me tell you what

shortchanges our troops is when we keep them in harm's way in a war

that makes no sense, when we have them serve as referees in a civil

war, when we put more and more of our troops, when we escalate our

involvement in this war. That shortchanges our troops.

The fact of the matter is this administration has been shortchanging

our troops for a long, long time, Mr. Speaker. When wounded veterans

come back, when people come back from this war with post-traumatic

stress syndrome and they can't get the care that they need, that

shortchanges our troops.

I don't think it shortchanges our troops to reunite our soldiers with

their families and their loved ones back in the safety of this country.

That doesn't shortchange our troops. That actually is what our troops

deserve.

I think we need to understand that all this rhetoric, the constant

invocation of 9/11, the constant admonitions that somehow we are not

being true to our troops if we talk about cutting aid, withholding

funds, stopping funding for this war because this President won't deal

with us, we need to put that rhetoric aside.

This President will not listen to the American people. Put the

rhetoric aside. We have to do what is right.

Let me tell you one final thing, Mr. Speaker. All of us who serve in

this Congress do not have to wake up in harm's way. We are not on the

front lines in Iraq. I would like to have an amendment introduced some

day to a bill that says all these people who want to go to war all the

time, they should be the ones who lead the charge. Let those who are up

here constantly calling for ``stay the course'' and ``let's continue

the current policy,'' let them go and fight.

The time has come to end this war. That is what the American people

want, and this Congress has the guts to do it. I thank the gentlewoman.