Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the gentlelady from

California (Ms. Waters), for organizing this special order tonight, but

also for her leadership in the Out of Iraq Caucus, which is growing

each and every day.

I think most Members now, whether they supported or opposed the

authorization to use force, understand now that we must get out of

Iraq. So I want to thank Congresswoman Waters and all of the members

for continuing to beat the drum on behalf of the American people.

Last night, President Bush went on prime time television to present

to the Nation the results really of what I call his ``listening tour''

on what to do about Iraq. Four years into this war, the President has

suddenly taken an interest in listening, but he is certainly not

hearing the American people.

A Washington Post-ABC News poll conducted after the President made

his case for escalation found that 61 percent of Americans oppose

sending more than 20,000 additional troops to Iraq, with 52 percent

saying that they strongly oppose the plan. Just 36 percent said that

they backed the President's new proposal, and a majority of Americans

said Bush's plan for our troops will make no difference whether the war

can be won or lost.

The American people oppose this escalation. Members of Congress

oppose this escalation. The President's own military advisers oppose

this escalation. But in spite of this opposition, in spite of his

claims to have been listening, the President went before the American

people last night and basically just asked us to trust him, and

said, who cares about what the American people think or believe?

Well, I have a question for the President: Why, after the weapons of

mass destruction that never existed; after the connections with al

Qaeda that proved to be made up, with Iraq; after declaring ``mission

accomplished'' and turning so many corners that made us, quite frankly,

totally dizzy; why, given his track record, would we trust his judgment

now?

Last night, the President said, ``Where mistakes have been made, the

responsibility lies with me.'' Let me tell you, twisting the

intelligence to rush this Nation into an unnecessary war was a mistake

whose cost we have not yet begun to measure, not only in terms of lives

and treasure but also in terms of our Nation's security.

I agree with the President that the responsibility does indeed lie

with him, so he needs to rectify this mistake and bring our troops home

and bring them home now.

It is clear that the President, quite frankly, has lost touch with

reality. Iraq has become the defining issue of his presidency, and he

is more interested in trying to save what remains of this horrible

legacy than he is in proposing anything that resembles a solution to

the mess that his administration has made in Iraq.

The President has proposed an escalation of the war in Iraq at

precisely the time, the exact time, when the American people are

calling for us to bring this war to an end. He is like the man who

finds himself stuck in a hole and decides the best way out is to keep

digging.

The question the Congress and the American people must now ask is,

how many people should die so that the President can avoid admitting he

has staked his Presidency and legacy on an unnecessary war whose

implementation his administration has really botched at every single

turn? How many have to die so that the President can save face?

The President talked about increasing funds for job creation in Iraq,

which would be a wonderful idea, quite frankly, since we bombed the

heck out of that country. However, his administration has a miserable

track record. Just look at it on reconstruction and the former

Republican Congress's unwillingness to conduct oversight over the

waste, fraud and abuse and war profiteering, $10 billion-plus so far

that is just being discussed, and we know it is more than $10 billion

that has been stolen in the name of rebuilding Iraq.

So without a fix to this broken system, the President's proposed

reconstruction funds are really just throwing more good money after

bad, and the taxpayers certainly don't deserve this. This is, quite

frankly, a cynical idea, with his policies the way they are now.

The President says that pursuing his failed policies in Iraq is

critical to fighting global terrorism. But let me ask you, is spending

$2 billion a week to referee a civil war in Iraq the best way we can

spend our money in fighting global terrorism? Let's not forget, the 9/

11 Commission pointed out there was no connection, I mean no

connection, between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda prior to this war.

Today, Iraq is a terrorist recruiting ground as a direct result, mind

you, a direct result of this unnecessary war, and the longer we stay

there, the worse it gets.

How much money should be spent propping up a failed policy in Iraq so

that the President can kick the can and hand off responsibilities for

his failed policy, quite frankly, this is what I think he is trying to

do, to the next occupant of the Oval Office?

Finally, let me just say, in October, the President was asked if he

would rule out military bases, permanent military bases, and his

refusal to say yes, which he refused to say, really did fuel the

mistrust of the Iraqi public and strengthen the insurgency.

So, Madam Chairman, I want to thank you again for your voice and for

maintaining the 70-plus members of the Out of Iraq Caucus. This is a

civil war. It is an occupation which should end, and the best way that

we support our troops is to bring our troops home.