Mr. Speaker, with this Congress blindly passing each and

every one of the President's requests for more money for the war in

Iraq, which is soon to exceed $300 billion in total costs, the time is

long overdue for a little common sense about how we spend the American

people's money.

Earlier this month I introduced new legislation, the Common Sense

Budget Act of 2006, legislation that puts some sanity back into the

Nation's fiscal policy. This bill already has the support of more than

35 cosponsors.

It is beyond dispute that this administration, in tandem with the

Republican Congress, has been, to put it mildly, less than fiscally

responsible. And are they spending on the neediest Americans, those who

need a hand up quite often just to make it from one day to the next?

No, of course not. Instead, they fattened up the Pentagon and lavished

wealthy special interests with subsidies and tax breaks.

Last fall's budget debate actually exposed the staggering hypocrisy

of it all because the very same congressional majority that is

responsible for the fiscal decadence of the last several years suddenly

started lecturing about thrift and responsibility. They were shocked,

shocked, that spending had been going on around here.

Federal money for Katrina reconstruction, they decided, had to be

offset by budget cuts. Deficit spending is okay, apparently, when it

comes to upper-bracket tax cuts, but not for poor people whose homes

are under water.

Well, guess what they chose to cut. The social safety net: Medicaid,

food stamps, public housing, students loans, and on and on. Just the

kinds of programs that saved my life and my children's lives when I was

a single mom on welfare 35 years ago. To help people on the gulf coast

who lost everything, they took from the people who have virtually

nothing. That is your Republican fiscal policy in a nutshell.

Well, enough of that. It is time we invested more in our people and

less in our defense contractors. My Common Sense Budget Act would trim

$60 billion in waste from the Pentagon budget and put it to work on

behalf of the people and the programs that truly strengthen America.

The money would be distributed as follows: $5 billion a year for

homeland security to make up for funding shortfalls in emergency

preparedness, infrastructure upgrades, and grants for first responders;

$10 billion each year for energy independence, to kick the imported oil

habit that we have in this Nation by investing in efficient, renewable

energy sources; $5 billion devoted to putting a dent in the $8.2

trillion national debt; and for children's health care, $10 billion

annually to provide health care coverage for the millions of uninsured

American children; $10 billion over 12 years to rebuild and modernize

every public K-12 school in this country; $5 billion a year to retrain

250,000 Americans who have lost their jobs because of foreign trade;

medical research, $2 billion a year to restore recent cuts to the

National Institutes of Health budget; and $13 billion a year in

humanitarian assistance that allows poor nations to feed 6 million

children who are at risk of dying from starvation every year, to end

global hunger.

The money is there to make an extraordinary difference in people's

lives. We just need to challenge the entrenched interests and take on

the sacred cows.

General Larry Korb worked with the Progressive Caucus and me to draft

this model alternative, and Ben Cohen from Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and

the organization Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities also helped

make the introduction of this bill possible.

There are models of good corporate citizenship, you see, businesses

that understand that the return on these investments will benefit the

entire society: a skilled workforce, healthy children, modern schools,

fewer fossil fuels, better fire departments, scientific progress, less

debt. These socially responsible businesses understand what makes

America strong and safe, and it is not a bloated Pentagon budget that

continues to invest in Cold War.