Mr. Speaker, I don't have a vote in the full House,

but if I did, I would have voted for the supplemental and for the

override of the President's veto. So I am proud that a bipartisan

majority voted on my behalf and on behalf of the American public, who

do not support the war in Iraq, do not support the surge, and want to

see a clear effort to extricate this country from an internal civil war

and to bring our troops home.

It is clear to me that, despite the glossed over reports, the surge

has done nothing but to cause one of the highest casualty rates in the

month that just ended. Although there is no good option, the problems

will continue for some time whether we go or leave. It is clear that

the Iraqis want us out. It is clear that we lose or disable our own

soldiers every day, and that innocent Iraqis are also injured every day

that we stay. So the only moral choice is the one embodied in the

supplemental and the two votes that have been taken.

I reject the way this supplemental has been characterized. If you

listen to the news media, you would think that the nonIraq war items in

the supplemental were nothing but pork, used to induce Members to vote

on this bill. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In addition to giving the President what he asked for, we have made

sure that a number of emergency domestic issues are also addressed.

That is what supplementals are for. But let's start with the war,

because in addition to fully funding the needs of troops, this bill

contains $450 million for a very important and very much needed post-

traumatic stress disorder counseling for our men and women when they

come home to help them transition and to help them resume normal lives

after being immersed in the caldron of war. We owe it to our soldiers

and their families, having borne the bankrupt of this war, to have the

help they need when they return.

Traumatic brain injury has been called the signature wound of this

war, especially if so many of our soldiers suffer from it after

exposure to bomb blast and IEDs. This supplemental includes $450

million for research into the best treatment and care for those who

have to be hospitalized and rehabilitated because of these injuries.

We were all horrified when the problems at the Walter Reed Medical

Center and other veterans facilities across the country were exposed;

$20 million is included in the supplemental to address this time-

honored facility that is the forefront of care for our war-wounded

veterans. There is another $100 million to ensure that our military,

National Guard and Reserve members get timely health care, including

mental health care. Once again, we owe it to them to respond with the

best possible care that we can give.

This bill also addresses the shamefully long lingering needs from one

of the biggest and most tragic domestic crises of our time, when

Hurricane Katrina devastated the gulf in 2005, much was promised to

those who were left homeless and uprooted in its wake. But,

unfortunately, until this bill, not enough has been done. Included in

the supplemental is $1.3 billion for levee protection and coastal

system restoration to make them structurally and environmentally safer

so that New Orleaneans and other gulf residents can resume their lives.

After Katrina schools were devastated. Teachers left. In order for

people to move back home, they need to be assured that there will be

renewed and revitalized schools for their children's education. The

supplemental provides $30 million for K-12 education to bring those

schools back and for recruitment to bring back teachers and other

educational professionals back to the city. Some of our universities,

like Southern and Dillard, were also damaged by the

storm of the century. There is $30 million requested in that

supplemental to assist them.

The health, housing, small business and community development needs

of the gulf are also finally heard and responded to this in measure,

with a provision for community disaster loan forgiveness to assist

local governments in meeting the needs of their displaced and

devastated people.

There is also $4.3 billion of FEMA disaster recovery grants and a

social services block grant extension; $25 million for small business

disaster loans, and $80 billion for HUD tenant-based rental assistance.

In the area of health care, two great needs are addressed in this

bill with $1 billion to purchase vaccines, emergency vaccines, that

would be needed to protect this country in the case of a global flu

pandemic; and another $750 million to make sure that the children's

health insurance programs, which cover millions of children in 14

States and some of the territories, will continue uninterrupted.

These are just some of the important areas funded in this bill, and

it's why it must go forward. If we don't do it in this supplemental, a

measure that is reserved for critical issues like these, it will be

difficult, if not impossible, to get them done at all.

The American people are looking at us and wondering if their

priorities are our priorities. This legislation demonstrates that we

not only know what the priorities are, but that we are ready to stand

with them and act on the issues they have told us are important to

them.