Mr. Speaker, before the invasion of Iraq, Secretary of

Defense Donald Rumsfeld was interviewed on television by George

Stephanopoulos. Mr. Stephanopoulos asked Secretary Rumsfeld what

invading Iraq would cost. Rumsfeld answered,

Mr. Stephanopoulos then replied that outside estimates say it would

be up to $300 billion, to which Rumsfeld replied,

Well, it may have been baloney to Rumsfeld then, but he must eat his

words now because the cost of the occupation has climbed to over $400

billion so far. And it's going to go up, up, and up because our leaders

in the White House seem simply not to care how much this occupation

costs. It's like that old joke: We could say they are spending like

drunken sailors, but we wouldn't say that because that would be an

insult to the sailors.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated yesterday that

the occupation of Iraq could cost the taxpayers $1.9 trillion by the

year 2017. Of that amount with over $500 billion going to just pay off

the interest on the debt we're piling up, it is going to cost $500

billion. That's $500 billion that would fly out of our treasury and

land in Japan and in China and the other countries that are lending us

the money for the occupation. That is far more than what the SCHIP bill

would cost us.

It is incredible to me and to most of my colleagues on this side of

the aisle that the administration would rather give our country's money

to foreign governments and investors than invest it in the health care

of America's poor children. And it is incredible to me that my

colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who lecture us daily about

fiscal constraints, did not make a peep about this fiscal catastrophe.

The next question is, what are we getting for this money? The answer

is, we are getting a slap in the face from the Iraqi leadership.

Thomas Friedman, the New York Times columnist who has won three

Pulitzer Prizes, reported yesterday that the Iraqi leaders who are

supposed to be working on the political reconciliation needed to end

the conflict have been more asleep at the switch than ever. Mr.

Friedman writes:

after General Petraeus testified before the

Congress?

and this is Mr. Friedman speaking,

With American troops and innocent civilians continuing to die in

Iraq, you would think our leaders in the White House would be on the

phone ten times a day with the Iraqi leaders demanding that they get

out of their La-Z-Boy recliners and get to work. But the White House

shows no desire to knock heads together. What does the White House do

instead? It sends us a request for another $46 billion for this

occupation.

We must tell the White House,

Then we must use our power of the purse to defund the

occupation. Instead, we must fully fund the safe, orderly, and

responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq, and that includes

the withdrawal of all military contractors, including those trigger-

happy Blackwater boys who have given our country a black eye.

Mr. Speaker, from now on every time the administration tells us it

needs more money for its senseless occupation of Iraq, we have the

perfect one-word answer, and that word is