Madam Speaker, for the past 5 years, the administration

has underfunded the No Child Left Behind Act to the tune of more than

$50 billion. This has robbed millions of children of the education they

will need to succeed in the 21st century, and it is robbing America of

the brain power we need to stay competitive in the global economy.

Those of us who believe it's a bad idea to shortchange our kids and

our Nation begged the administration to fully fund the No Child Left

Behind Act, but our pleas were ignored. That is one of the reasons I

was so outraged last week when the White House requested $46 billion in

supplemental funding for its occupation of Iraq. That $46 billion,

Madam Speaker, is almost identical to the amount that the

administration has underfunded No Child Left Behind. In fact, the

administration announced its request at a press conference. In that one

short press conference, they asked for virtually the same amount for

Iraq that it has been denying to our Nation's schools for nearly 6

years.

And while the administration has demanded that every school in

America show adequate yearly progress on its learning benchmarks or

they will be punished, punished financially for the most part, it has

allowed the Iraqi Government to show virtually no progress at all when

it comes to meeting its benchmarks for peace.

And education is not the only crying need that is being ignored. The

opportunity costs of the occupation are actually incalculable. The

occupation is soaking up dollars we need to meet so many of our

domestic challenges. If we really want America to be secure, we must

invest in child care, we must invest in health care, sustainable

energy, the environment, law enforcement, community and economic

development, medical research, real homeland security, et cetera, et

cetera, et cetera.

But the administration believes that policing a centuries-old civil

war in

Iraq trumps all other needs. The American people do not agree with this

administration's priorities. They want action, they want real solutions

to our domestic problems, and they want to fight a real war on

terrorism, not the phony war on terrorism the administration is

fighting in Iraq.

When the President signed the No Child Left Behind Act, Madam

Speaker, he said it was the most important piece of legislation most of

us will ever work on. The education of our children is far more

important to the future of our country than an endless and

counterproductive occupation of another country.

That is why Congress must finally stand up to the administration and

say no, no to supplemental funding that would bring our total spending

in Iraq this fiscal year alone to $160 billion. Madam Speaker, that's

over $13 billion a month, or nearly $450 million per day.

Almost exactly a year ago, the American people sent us to Congress to

end the occupation of Iraq. It's time that we do it. We must use our

power of the purse to fully fund the safe, orderly and responsible

redeployment of all of our troops out of Iraq, and that includes the

withdrawal of all of our military contractors as well.

As if one occupation army weren't enough, these independent

contractors comprise a second occupation army that is angering the

Iraqi people and actually making life much harder for our very own

troops.

Madam Speaker, we can't afford to keep throwing money into the

bottomless pit of Iraq. That appears to be what our leaders in the

White House want us to do. But their policy is bankrupting all of us

politically, economically, and morally. It is time that we come to our

senses; it is time to end this madness.