Today is actually my 1-year anniversary of being sworn in

to this Congress. It's hard to believe it's been a year.

One of the things I came to Congress to do was to really move us

toward ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While we look toward

the 11th anniversary of Operation Enduring Freedom, I believe it's

necessary to reflect on the staggering human and economic costs this

country has endured over the past decade. Since 2001, we've spent

nearly $635 billion on the Afghanistan war. Under FY 2012 figures, this

equates to an average of $8.8 billion a month, $2 billion a week, and

nearly $300 million a day.

With what it takes to keep this war going for a week, we can hire

45,000 more construction workers to help repair and build our own

crumbling infrastructure. With what it costs to keep this war going for

1 more month, we can hire over 250,000 new teachers, nearly enough to

hire back all of the teachers and public school officials who've lost

their jobs during this great recession. While these figures seem

astounding, they don't begin to compare to the human toll that this war

has taken on our active service members and military families.

Last October, on the weekend of the 10th anniversary of this war in

Afghanistan, I visited Arlington West in California--an incredible

memorial to the men and women who died in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's

truly a moving experience walking through row after row of crosses in

the sand at Santa Monica Beach.

As of today, 2,041 U.S. soldiers have been killed in Afghanistan, and

over 12,000 have been wounded. While many of us talk about these

figures here on the House floor, I know many of us have even more

personal experiences with families who have suffered loss or illnesses

or injuries of their loved ones.

Unfortunately, I had reason to visit Walter Reed twice in the last 6

months, and I've seen the evidence of the sacrifice that we're asking

these young men and women to bear. I think all of us should take the

time to walk the halls of Walter Reed and see the full cost that this

war has taken. My own cousin, a young man of 26, was only in

Afghanistan 3 months and was shot in his leg. It's unclear whether or

not he'll get full recovery of his leg. Last week, I visited one of my

former employees in the City of Los Angeles whose son, Ben, was in

Afghanistan. He reenlisted three times to go back. Unfortunately, this

last time, he's now lost both of his legs. His future and his family's

future has changed forever.

When you walk the halls at Walter Reed, you're made to remember the

mothers bearing the crosses of their children, armed with only the

memory of the love lost and unique responsibility that we all have to

the fallen. You're reminded of the men and women who are still here and

of the battles that they're going to have to fight long after they hang

up their fatigues and come home. You're reminded of the struggles

shared by the families--the mothers, the fathers, the sisters, the

brothers, the sons, and daughters--of these veterans who bear the seen

and unseen scars of four, five, even six tours of duty.

These scars are most evident in the recent news that 154 Active Duty

service members have committed suicide in the first 150 days of this

year. This is nearly 1 per day. This is a heartbreaking statistic that

brings into stark relief the terrible toll of nearly 11 years of war.

Mr. Chairman, we need to bring these troops home. That's why I

support this amendment that provides for the safe and orderly

withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and to help bring this war

to an end. A decade at war is too long.

I want to thank Congresswoman Lee for raising this incredibly

important issue, and I urge my colleagues to support this effort and

help bring the troops home. With that, I yield back the balance of my

time.