Mr. Chairman, I rise with great pride to stand with

Chairman Young in order to reaffirm my commitment and the commitment of

the members of the Armed Services Committee to the dignified and

respectful transportation of the remains of our war casualties to their

final resting places.

The current process of airlifting our fallen warriors was initiated

by the Committee on Armed Services and legislated in 2006 following a

series of unfortunate cases in which the transfers of remains simply

did not meet the high standard that the people of our Nation demanded.

As awareness grew, it was very quickly clear that the routine treatment

of our warriors on their returns home was not meeting the expectations

of families and communities across the Nation.

Without this law, the Department of Defense would be required to

transport them by the cheapest means, in other words, to transport

remains without an escort and in the cargo holds of commercial

airliners along with the suitcases and FedEx packages. No one wants to

see that. That is not how the American people wish to treat those who

have made the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

The soul of a nation can be measured by its commitment to honor those

who have sacrificed all to defend that nation. If a nation takes a

bookkeeper's approach to measuring that commitment, then, in this

Nation's case, the cost of Arlington, of all the national cemeteries,

of the cemeteries we maintain overseas, of the efforts made to account

for our war dead and missing is too high. When it comes to upholding

the traditions so intrinsically linked to the values treasured by the

American people, our Nation will never be accused of possessing a

bookkeeper's mentality. There is only one standard for the treatment of

our fallen heroes, and the American people will demand that the

standard will be met in the most dignified and respectful manner

possible.

I commend the gentleman from Florida for taking a moment to reaffirm

the commitment of the Congress and the American people on this

important issue. I cannot understand anyone who would challenge him on

his devotion to our service people. He and his wife both have dedicated

the ultimate measure to seeing that our service people are given the

respect and the things that they need. I don't know anyone who has

visited the hospitals more or who has really cared about our people. I

commend the chairman for this, for his

devotion to those who wear the uniform.

I yield back the balance of my time.