As a United States marine who served in Iraq and

Afghanistan and who saw the bodies and the flag-draped caskets with

dignity and respect get put into the backs of airplanes and sit off of

the battlefield in those two theaters, I want to thank you, Mr.

Chairman, for standing up for the fact that we accept them back into

our arms in this Nation with the same dignity and respect.

I would like to go a little bit further.

Beyond saying this isn't Congress' job, if it were not for Congress,

the bodies of our dead military men and women who come back to this

Nation would be in the cargo holds of commercial airliners. As the moms

and dads watch their sons and daughters get forklifted off a commercial

airline cargo hold and set on the ground--with no military escorts and

with no flag-draped coffins--that is what we should be ashamed of. I

would say that this is an issue that resonates with anybody who has

worn a uniform or with any family who has had to receive the remains of

a loved one.

Those who die for this Nation should be handled by honor guards, not

by forklifts. It's harsh but true that the people who question the

necessity of this process need to examine their souls and ask

themselves if they are even worthy of the freedoms that are protected

and secured by our military heroes. There is no extravagant cost. There

are no luxury accommodations. Those who pay for our freedom with their

lives deserve to be treated with respect and handled as the heroes that

they are.

There are plenty of places in the defense budget we can find savings,

but the idea that someone would suggest the way we treat our war dead

is a waste of money and resources should be ashamed, and he should not

bring that up to any more Representatives in the future.

I again want to thank Chairman Young for his extraordinary service

and for the way that he honors our wounded and our KIAs.

I yield back the balance of my time.