The amendment is fairly simple. It's an amendment to

seek to freeze defense spending for 1 single year. It is not a cut.

Only in Washington, D.C., could we spend more money from one year to

the next and call it a cut.

This is not a ``cut'' amendment. This is an amendment to freeze

spending for 1 year. It is an amendment to set the base defense

spending levels at $518 billion, the exact same amount as last year's

appropriation that was approved just a few months ago. It is $2 billion

above what the Pentagon asked for. It is also $2 billion above what the

President asked for. While the amendment gives control to the generals

over the spending, it still protects military pay, the Defense Health

Program, and the war budget.

We've heard arguments in favor of a 1-year freeze before. This

amendment is entirely consistent with the Simpson-Bowles plan, and it

is entirely consistent with the Domenici-Rivlin plan.

What arguments will we hear against it? We may hear, as we've heard

earlier today, that the defense budget has already been cut $39 billion

over the last 2 years. This is the base defense budget for the last 2

years and the base defense budget in this year.

The base defense spending has gone up from 2011 to 2012. If the bill

passes unamended, it will go up again this year. Only in Washington,

D.C., is that considered a $39 billion cut.

We may hear that the CBO says that the Pentagon is still $9 billion

short based upon a report they released earlier this month. I have the

report. The report reads:

To execute its base-budget plans for 2013, the Department would

require appropriations 1.4 percent less than last year's appropriation.

We may also hear the argument that this amendment would compromise

our defense in some fashion. That can only be true if the same exact

appropriation that we passed just 6 months ago put our defense at risk,

because this is the exact same spending level as we established 6

months ago.

The one thing we do know is that even with this amendment, if this

amendment would pass, we will be spending more on defense spending than

the Pentagon asked for and that the President asked for, and we will be

spending exactly the same as we did last year.

We've heard a lot in the last day or two about ``austerity.'' It's

another word that, I think, has lost its traditional meaning. It means

something different in Washington than it does back home.

``Austerity,'' to me, means spending less. Total discretionary

spending will be up this year. Total mandatory spending will be up this

year. Total government spending will be up this year. We are still

facing a $1 trillion deficit by the time that this year is over. We

need to do better in getting our spending under control. It is easy to

cut things that we do not like on both sides of the aisle; it is hard

to cut things that we like.

The defense of this Nation means a tremendous amount to me, as I know

it means to every Member of this Chamber. If I thought for a second

that this amendment would put a single soldier at risk, if I thought

for a second that this amendment would put a single citizen at risk, I

would take it down immediately. All it does is freeze spending from

last year. If we cannot do that simple task, do we really think we have

an honest chance of solving our debts and our deficit problems?

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

I thank the gentleman from California.

I rise very briefly to respond to a few points made by my colleague

and friend from New Jersey. Yes, North Korea is a threat. Yes, Iran is

a difficulty. Yes, China's role in the world is growing, and we will

need to deal with that. No, Syria was not a problem last year, but

Egypt was. All of these were challenges to us last year. All of these

were challenges to us just 6 months ago when we set the base Defense

appropriation at $518 billion, and $518 billion was good enough 6

months ago. It should be good enough today.

I received a letter regarding this particular amendment, and it used

a lot of the same language the gentleman from New Jersey did. It

mentioned that these were real cuts already, that the cuts we have put

in place regarding the defense budget were real cuts, not cuts in

future growth. This is the CBO's estimate of the defense-based budget

for the next 15 or 20 years.

Can someone please show me in this dark line, which is the base

budget, where the cuts are? Because in my world, when we cut spending,

those graphs go down. The only reductions that we have seen, the only

real reductions that we have seen in defense spending are in the

overseas on the global war on terror, which we all agree was a good

thing because it came as a result of winding up operations in Iraq and

reducing operations in Afghanistan.

But what we do in this town is when we increase spending on the

global war on terror, we don't count it as an increase; but when we cut

spending on that same thing, we do count it as a cut, and that is

simply not right. It's not fair, and it's not honest with people back

home. We should tell people how we spend their money.

To sit here and say that the cuts that the Defense Department has

incurred already are real cuts is not accurate. The sequester is. This

is not a debate about the sequester, because I am as opposed to the

sequester as anybody in this room. I have voted several times to

replace it with spending reductions in other places. That's not what

this discussion is about. This is about whether or not the $518 billion

that was good enough 6 months ago is good enough today.

With that, I ask once again for support for the amendment.

This is a follow-up amendment to an amendment that I

had offered and we had a chance to debate, and once again I thank the

chairman for the opportunity yesterday to discuss the issue before the

amendment was ruled out of order.

As you recall, very briefly, $5.6 billion this year has been moved

out of the base defense budget and into the war budget. It violates a

policy that we have tried to follow in this House since 9/11, and

actually violates a policy that the bill, itself, says we should not

violate going forward, beginning in 2014.

I simply tried to draw attention to that in yesterday's amendment

which was ruled out of order.

This amendment deals with the exact same thing, and it simply takes

that $5.6 billion out of the budget and puts

it right back in, which sounds like a strange thing to do, but it's the

only way within the rules to draw attention to the fact that this $5.6

billion is in the war budget when it actually should be in the base

defense budget.

This is not a spending amendment; this is a good-governance

amendment. This is not a spending amendment; it is an accountability

amendment. It is a bipartisan amendment. Mr. Jordan from Ohio and Mr.

Welch from Vermont are amongst those joining me in sponsoring this

particular amendment.

Again, this is a good-government amendment, and I would think that it

would have bipartisan support. I ask for its support.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.