Mr. Speaker, for the last 2 years, Halliburton and

subsidiaries such as Kellogg, Brown, and Root, have received billions

of dollars in contracts to rebuild Iraq. Despite the handsome profits,

Halliburton, which used to be run by the Vice President, Dick Cheney,

has not had to offer competitive bids on the vast majority of these

projects. Earlier this week a Halliburton subsidiary received yet

another no-bid contract for reconstruction efforts.

This should not come as a surprise to anyone, anyone who has

monitored the greed, the selfishness, the sheer corruption with which

the Bush administration has administered Iraq's reconstruction. Only

this time, the contract was not for Iraq, it was for hurricane relief

and reconstruction efforts here in the United States. Finally, the

chickens have come to roost.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues might recall that Halliburton is the

company that overcharged the United States Government for meals served

to soldiers serving in Iraq. It is also the company that made the

United States Government pay a ridiculous markup on gasoline purchased

from nearby Kuwait. Unfortunately, the Bush administration did not seem

to mind. Halliburton's corruption certainly did not stop the White

House from turning to them yet again as its primary source for no-bid

government contracts in the Gulf.

But the sad truth is, these examples of corruption and incompetence

are not just isolated to Halliburton. They are emblematic of the Bush

administration itself.

This is the administration that presided over $9 billion in missing

funds that was supposed to pay for Iraq's reconstruction. This is the

administration that, for over a year, neglected to provide the

lifesaving protective body armor that our troops needed to survive.

These examples are not isolated. No, they are indicative of how the

Bush administration has approached both the war in Iraq and the recent

hurricane devastation in the gulf coast.

The sheer ineptitude surrounding the war in Iraq has been the most

staggering of all. The Bush administration had no plan for how to

conduct the war, they had no plan for securing the country once Saddam

was deposed, and now they have no plan for ending the war.

It is clear that the military situation in Iraq is not improving. In

fact, it is the very presence of nearly 150,000 U.S. soldiers who

appear as occupiers that so enrages Iraq's insurgency.

By bringing our troops home, we can save both American and Iraqi

lives, and we can reunite thousands of American families in the

process. That is why I have called on the House Committee on Armed

Services and the Committee on International Relations to hold hearings

to address how best to achieve a military disengagement. Since they

will not address this issue, we will.

Two weeks ago, I held an informal bipartisan hearing to address how

to end the war in Iraq. Not when, but how. We heard from an expert

panel of witnesses who each testified that the need for a change in

U.S. policy is absolute in Iraq. This is not about finding the one

right approach. It is about getting the conversation started. It is

about putting all the ideas on the table.

Mr. Speaker, my hope is that last week's hearing will help begin a

discussion that we desperately need, one that is long overdue, one that

will help save lives, how to end the war in Iraq, and how to bring our

troops home.