Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 818 provides for

consideration of H.R. 4156, the Orderly and Responsible Iraq

Redeployment Appropriations Act of 2008. The rule provides 2 hours of

debate and provides for one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq has gone on for nearly 5 years.

Thousands of our brave men and women have lost their lives. Many more

thousands have returned home with injuries so severe that they will

require a lifetime of medical treatments.

We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars on the war, virtually

none of it paid for, almost all of it on our national credit card. That

means that the bill will be paid for not by us, but by our kids and our

grandkids.

The war has diminished our standing in the world. It has distracted

us from the war in Afghanistan, the very place where those responsible

for 9/11 are now regrouping. And it has put incredible strain on the

readiness of our Armed Forces.

The President of the United States and many of my Republican friends

have argued fiercely over the years for a blank check. They want no

strings, no conditions, no benchmarks, no end dates, no accountability,

no nothing.

Today, they will tell us that the President's strategy is working;

that the recent decrease in deaths and casualties in certain areas of

Iraq prove it, and, therefore, we should provide yet another blank

check.

Mr. Speaker, let me caution my friends about declaring ``mission

accomplished'' yet again. While all of us pray that the violence

continues to subside, we should also appreciate history enough to know

that lulls in intense violence are not always permanent. Let me also

state that the current levels of violence in Iraq are still

unacceptably high.

As Joe Christoff of the Government Accountability Office recently

testified, this recent reduction in violence should be put into the

proper context as it coincides with increased sectarian cleansing and a

massive refugee displacement. Let me quote:

``You know, we look at the attack data going down, but it's not

taking into consideration that there might be fewer attacks because you

have ethnically cleansed neighborhoods, particularly in the Baghdad

area. It's produced 2.2 million refugees that have left, and it's

produced 2 million internally displaced persons within the country as

well.''

Mr. Speaker, we must remember that the justification for the surge

and the justification for the Bush military strategy in Iraq has always

been to foster Iraqi political reconciliation. And there is precious

little evidence of any such thing.

Over 10 months ago, President Bush said, ``A successful strategy for

Iraq goes beyond military operations. Ordinary Iraqi citizens must see

that military operations are accompanied by visible improvements in

their neighborhoods and communities. So America will hold the Iraqi

Government to the benchmarks it has announced.''

But, Mr. Speaker, as the GAO reported last month, ``Iraq has not yet

advanced key legislation on equitably sharing oil revenues and holding

provincial elections. In addition, sectarian influences within Iraqi

ministries continue while militia influences divide the loyalties of

Iraqi security forces.''

Mr. Speaker, the Maliki government continues to be corrupt, inept and

without the support of the vast majority of the Iraqi people. When will

the Bush administration live up to its word and hold the Iraqi

Government accountable for its actions, or inaction?

The fundamental crisis facing Iraq remains the same: the inability of

Sunni, Shiites and Kurds to agree to set aside their sectarian

divisions and live in peace. As long as we remain there indefinitely,

Mr. Speaker, there is no incentive for anything to change.

Mr. Speaker, our soldiers have already given so much to create an

opportunity for the Iraqi Government, an opportunity that that

government has squandered. So, today, we are saying we want a different

course. We reject the President's vision of an endless war that will

cost more lives and bankrupt our Nation.

Today, we will vote on a bill that requires the redeployment of U.S.

troops from Iraq to begin within 30 days of enactment, with a target

for completion of December 15, 2008. It would prohibit the deployment

of U.S. troops to Iraq who are not fully trained and equipped. And it

changes the mission of our forces.

It also extends to all government agencies and personnel the

limitations in the Army Field Manual on permissible interrogation

techniques, which means that torture will be absolutely banned, and

anyone who engages in such practices will be committing a crime under

U.S. law, no ands, ifs or buts.

Mr. Speaker, it is no longer acceptable for Congress to simply write

yet another blank check. It is not acceptable for the President to

simply run out the clock and hand this problem off to his successor.

This is a war that George Bush started, and this is a war that he

needs to end. For the sake of our troops, for the sake of our country,

we need to support this legislation. Enough is enough.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 20 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California mischaracterized my

position and what I am invested in. I am invested in what is best for

this country, Mr. Dreier. And I am invested in what is best for our

troops. And I am opposed to this Bush policy of an endless war, and I

think it would be a mistake for this Congress to give this President

another blank check.

This is not a meaningful charade, Mr. Dreier. Those of us who are

arguing for this legislation want to bring this war to an end.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California

(Ms. Matsui).

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds.

The gentleman says give the Iraqi Government a chance. We are on our

fifth year, Mr. Speaker. Three American soldiers lost their lives in

Iraq yesterday, bringing the total to 3,858 deaths. I think we have

given them more than a chance.

Mr. Speaker, let me yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, I and everybody in this Chamber, hopefully, wants to see

democracy flourish in Iraq. But the fact of the matter is that the

status quo isn't producing that. And maybe, just maybe, the corrupt and

inept Maliki government will get its act together if it finally

realizes that we won't be there forever, that this will not be an

endless war.

Our troops have sacrificed enough. They have sacrificed enough.

Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the subject that we are

debating here today, and that is the war in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, we have

been fighting this war for nearly 5 years. That's longer than we fought

World War II. My friends on the other side of the aisle have said over

and over and over, just give the Iraqi Government a chance. Well, Mr.

Speaker, after 5 years, I say, give me a break.

It is not us, not any of us in this Chamber who are in harm's way.

But we have sent thousands and thousands and thousands of our fellow

citizens to battle in Iraq. They are in harm's way. They wake up

tomorrow in a situation where they are refereeing a civil war, and

that, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, is wrong.

My friends on the other side of the aisle talk about al Qaeda. Well,

we're all worried about al Qaeda, too. That's why we wish we were doing

the job in Afghanistan better. That's why we wish we weren't so

diverted from that mission in Iraq that we could actually have better

results in Afghanistan than we're having right now. We are worried, Mr.

Speaker, about the fact that al Qaeda is regrouping in Afghanistan, is

regrouping in Pakistan. That should be a worry to every single Member

in this Chamber. And yet we are stretched so thin, we are so

preoccupied in Iraq that we have lost sight of what our central mission

needs to be.

Mr. Speaker, victory is what is in the best interest of the American

people. And this war in Iraq has not only diminished our standing in

the world, it has spread our troops so thin that we can't complete

missions like the one that we need to be completing in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, too often in this place we talk about numbers instead of

the people behind those numbers. Yesterday, as I mentioned earlier,

another three American soldiers lost their lives in Iraq, bringing the

total to 3,858. Also yesterday, Mr. Speaker, CBS News reported that

there is an epidemic of suicide among our soldiers and our veterans.

Thousands and thousands of these men and women have taken their own

lives. For too many, the war does not end when they return home. And

behind each one of those numbers is a devastated family, a heartbroken

father, a new widow, a child without a father. Mr. Speaker, we will be

paying for this war for a very long, long time.

Now, my friends on the other side of the aisle say we all want the

war to end, we all want our troops to come home. Well, I say to my

friends, here is your chance. You have a voice. Use it. You have a

vote. Use it. You have the opportunity to change the direction of this

policy. You have the opportunity to force the Iraqi Government to live

up to its promises. You have the opportunity to finally, finally, honor

the will of the American people and to safely redeploy our troops. I

ask my friends to seize that opportunity and to support this bill.

The material previously referred to by Mr. Dreier is as follows: