Mr. Speaker, the American people get it.

Over 50 percent of the American people believe that we should now begin

a reduction of our troops.

As I listened here on the floor of the house, and I listened to my

good friends on the other side of the aisle claiming the me-me's and

the I-I's, I hear no one talking about victory.

Victory in what sense? So that we can pound our chests and brag about

what this Congress and this President has done?

We're talking about lives here. We're talking about lives. And I am

sick and tired of listening to people bragging about who can claim a

victory.

Well, my belief is that the soldiers on the battlefield, the most

deadliest year that we've ever had, 2006, we buried more than we could

ever imagine. Those soldiers have already claimed victory. They took

Fallujah. They took Baghdad.

And my concern is why have we not championed the victory of those

soldiers? Why haven't we welcomed them home, given them accolades

because they have been victorious?

Someone on the other side has not read this bill. This bill allows

for a redeployment in an orderly manner, and it demands that the

President use these dollars to redeploy.

I am not going to trample on the graves of dead soldiers and continue

a war that has no end. That government has the ability in Iraq to

diplomatically deal with democracy. We have died so they can deal with

democracy.

It is time to end this war now and to bring our soldiers home with

the dignity and victory they deserve.

Right now, in the Nation's hospitals, we are seeing the results of

his victory. We are seeing soldiers with brain injury, soldiers with no

limbs. And we have a broken health care system that can't even address

the question of those soldiers with posttraumatic stress brain injury

and otherwise.

My voice is gone, but I am tired of this question of victory because

I believe, and I have a bill, and I ask my good friend from California

to join it, the Military Success Act of 2007 that chronicles the

victories of our soldiers.

We can bring them home with dignity. I am not going to tolerate one

more dead body. And it is time to end this war and end it now.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4156, introduced by my

colleague, Mr. Obey. I would like to thank him for his ongoing

leadership as chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, and on this

important issue in particular.

The legislation we are considering today provides our troops with the

resources they need, but it does not give the President the blank check

he has asked for to fund an endless combat operation in Iraq. Instead

of his additional $200 billion, we are considering a $50 billion

package, which institutes a redeployment timeline, as well as other

critical directives designed to transition our role in Iraq and bring

our troops home.

Madam Speaker, the funds provided by this legislation are, crucially,

tied to a requirement for the immediate start of the redeployment of

U.S. forces. It sets December 15, 2008, as the target date for the

completion of the redeployment, and requires redeployment to begin

within 30 days of enactment.

As lawmakers continue to debate U.S. policy in Iraq, our heroic young

men and women continue to willingly sacrifice life and limb on the

battlefield. Our troops in Iraq did everything we asked them to do. We

sent them overseas to fight an army; they are now caught in the midst

of an insurgent civil war and continuing political upheaval. The United

States will not and should not permanently prop up the Iraqi Government

and military. U.S. military involvement in Iraq will come to an end,

and, when U.S. forces leave, the responsibility for securing their

nation will fall to Iraqis themselves. However, whether or not my

colleagues agree that the time has come to withdraw our American forces

from Iraq, I believe that all of us in Congress should be of one accord

that our troops deserve our sincere thanks and congratulations.

For this reason, I extremely pleased to have worked with the

Democratic leadership to include language recognizing the extraordinary

achievements of our men and women in uniform. Paragraph 2 of Title I

reads, ``the performance of United States military personnel in Iraq

and Afghanistan should be commended, their courage and sacrifice have

been exceptional, and when they come home, their service should be

recognized appropriately.'' I believe that the inclusion of this

language makes it clear that we are proud of the accomplishments of our

troops, and we look forward to commending them as they return safely

home.

I also worked with the Leadership to include the language in

Paragraph 3 of Title 1. This paragraph reads, ``the primary purpose of

funds made available by this Act should be to transition the mission of

United States Armed Forces in Iraq and undertake their redeployment,

and not to extend or prolong the war.'' This language makes explicit

that this legislation is providing funding for the safe and responsible

redeployment of our troops, not for the continuation of combat

operations.

This legislation protects our troops, by providing them with the

funding they need to safely and successfully redeploy from Iraq. It

also prohibits the deployment of forces to Iraq who are not fully

trained and fully equipped. In addition, this legislation includes an

extension to all U.S. Government agencies and personnel of the current

prohibition in the Army Field Manual against the use of certain

interrogation techniques.

Mr. Speaker, this bill contains important language that changes the

mission of U.S. forces in Iraq to diplomatic and force protection,

targeted counterterrorism operations, and limited support to Iraqi

security forces. I firmly believe that we must make diplomacy and

statecraft tools of the first, rather than the last, resort. We must

seek constructive engagement with Iraq, its neighbors, and the rest of

the international community, as we work to bring resolution to this

calamitous conflict that has already gone on far too long.

Because of my deeply held belief that we must commend our military

for their exemplary performance and success in Iraq, I have introduced

legislation, H.R. 4020, with the support of a number of my colleagues,

entitled the ``Military Success in Iraq Commemoration Act of 2007.''

This legislation recognizes the extraordinary performance of the Armed

Forces in achieving the military objectives of the United States in

Iraq, encourages the President to issue a proclamation calling upon the

people of the United States to observe a national day of celebration

commemorating the military success of American troops in Iraq, and

provides other affirmative and tangible expressions of appreciation

from a grateful Nation to all veterans of the war in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, we have already expended 3,500 American lives and $400

billion in taxpayer dollars in Iraq. We have occupied the country for

over 4 years. And our President continues to push a strategy devoid of

clear direction and visible targets, while rejecting congressional

calls to solidify an exit strategy.

Last November, the American people clearly stated that they did not

want to see an endless conflict in Iraq; they went to the polls and

elected a new, Democratic Congress to lead our Nation out of Iraq. I am

proud to be a member of the Congressional class that listens and

adheres to the will of the American people, as we did when both houses

of Congress approved Iraq Supplemental bills that instituted a

timetable for U.S. withdrawal. We need a new direction, because we owe

our brave, fighting men and women so much more. Washington made a

mistake in going to war. It is time for politicians to admit that

mistake and fix it before any more lives are lost.

This Congress will not, as the previous, Republican, Congress did,

continue to rubber stamp what we believe to be an ill-conceived war. As

we continue to receive reports on the situation in Iraq, it is

important that we continue to look forward, to the future of Iraq

beyond a U.S. military occupation.

Despite the multitude of mistakes perpetrated by President Bush and

former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, our troops have achieved a military

success in ousting Saddam Hussein and assisting the Iraqis in

administering a democratic election and electing a democratic

government. However, only the Iraqi government can secure a lasting

peace. Time and time again, the Iraqi government has demonstrated an

inability to deliver on the political benchmarks that they themselves

agreed were essential to achieving national reconciliation. Continuing

to put the lives of our soldiers and our national treasury in the hands

of what by most informed accounts, even by members of the Bush

Administration, is an ineffective central Iraqi government is

irresponsible and contrary to the wishes of the overwhelming majority

of the American people.

Our Nation has already paid a heavy price in Iraq. Over 3,810

American soldiers have died. In addition, more than 27,660 have been

wounded in the Iraq war since it began in March 2003. June, July, and

August have marked the bloodiest months yet in the conflict, and U.S.

casualties in Iraq are 62 percent higher this year than at this time in

2006. This misguided, mismanaged, and misrepresented war has claimed

too many lives of our brave servicemen; its depth, breadth, and scope

are without precedent in American history. In addition, the United

States is spending an estimated $10 billion per month in Iraq. This $10

billion a month translates into $329,670,330 per day, $13,736,264 per

hour, $228,938 per minute, and $3,816 per second.

For this huge sum of money, we could have repaired the more than

70,000 bridges across America rated structurally deficient, $188

billion, potentially averting the tragedy that occurred August 1 in

Minneapolis, Minnesota. We could have rebuilt the levees in New

Orleans, $50 billion, protecting that city from future hurricanes that

could bring Katrina-like destruction upon the city. We could have

provided all U.S. public safety officials with interoperable

communication equipment, $10 billion, allowing them to effectively

communicate in the event of an emergency, and we could have paid for

screening all air cargo on passenger planes for the next 10 years, $3.6

billion. And, we could have enrolled 1.4 million additional children in

Head Start programs, $10 billion. Instead of funding increased death

and destruction in Iraq, we could have spent hard-earned taxpayer

dollars on important progress here at home.

The Foreign Affairs Committee, of which I am proud to be a member,

has recently heard a string of reports from military and civilian

officials about the political, military, social, and economic situation

in Iraq. Two weeks ago, the Government Accountability Office, GAO,

informed the Congress that the Iraqi government has met only 3 of the

18 legislative, economic, and security benchmarks. Despite the surge,

despite increasing U.S. military involvement, the Iraqi Government has

not made substantial progress toward stabilizing their country.

President Bush rationalized his surge, over opposition by myself and

other House Democrats, by arguing it would give the Iraqi government

``the breathing space it needs to make progress in other critical

areas,'' bringing about reconciliation between warring factions, Sunni

and Shia. However, non-partisan assessments, such as last week's GAO

report, have illustrated that escalating U.S. military involvement in

Iraq is instead hindering that nation's ability to move beyond the

devastation of war and death, to build a successful new government, and

to create a stable and secure environment. In the 7 months since the

surge began, increased American military presence has not been able to

end the relentless cycles of sectarian violence that continue to plague

Iraq. Nor have larger numbers of U.S. troops been successful in

unifying and strengthening the Iraqi Government.

Instead, the security situation continues to deteriorate. Sectarian

violence remains high, and even the Bush administration has noted the

unsatisfactory progress toward political reconciliation. The Sunni-led

insurgency continues, with insurgents conducting increasingly complex

and well-coordinated attacks. The August 2007 National Intelligence

Estimate cited ongoing violence, stating, ``the level of overall

violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians, remain

high; Iraq's sectarian groups remain unreconciled.'' The report went on

to note that al-Qaeda in Iraq, AQI, ``retains the ability to conduct

high-profile attacks,'' and ``Iraqi political leaders remain unable to

govern effectively.''

The ever-increasing sectarian violence is causing immense daily

challenges for Iraqis. Millions have been displaced, and an Iraqi Red

Crescent Organization has reported an increase of nearly 630,000

internally displaced persons from February 2007 to July 2007. The same

organization predicts an additional 80,000 to 100,000 persons are

displaced each month. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has

estimated that 1.8 million Iraqis are now refugees, with an additional

40,000 to 50,000 fleeing to neighboring countries each month. Iraq has

become a humanitarian disaster, and one that continues to get worse

every day.

The United States military is a skilled and highly proficient

organization, and where there are large numbers of U.S. troops, it is

unsurprising that we see fewer incidents of violence. However, it is

our responsibility to take a longer-term view. The United States will

not and should not permanently prop up the Iraqi Government and

military. U.S. military involvement in Iraq will come to an end, and,

when U.S. forces leave, the responsibility for securing their nation

will fall to Iraqis themselves. And so far, we have not seen a

demonstrated commitment by the Iraqi Government.

In addition, evidence suggests that not only is increased U.S.

military presence in Iraq not making that nation more secure, it may

also be threatening our national security by damaging our ability to

respond to real threats to our own homeland. The recently released

video by Osama bin Laden serves to illustrate that President Bush has

not caught this international outlaw, nor brought him to justice.

Instead, he has diverted us from the real war on terror to the war of

his choice in Iraq.

The former Chairman and Vice Chairman of the 9/11 Commission, Thomas

H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton, share this view. In a recent op-ed, Kean

and Hamilton note that our own actions have contributed to a rise of

radicalization and rage in the Muslim world. Kean and Hamilton write

that ``no conflict drains more time, attention, blood, treasure, and

support from our worldwide counterterrorism efforts than the war in

Iraq. It

has become a powerful recruiting and training tool for al-Qaeda.''

Our troops in Iraq did everything we asked them to do. We sent them

overseas to fight an army; they are now caught in the midst of an

insurgent civil war and political upheaval. I have, for some time now,

advocated for congressional legislation declaring a military victory in

Iraq, and recognizing the success of our military. Our brave troops

have completed the task we set for them; it is time now to bring them

home. Our next steps should not be a continuing escalation of military

involvement, but instead a diplomatic surge.

Democrats in Congress will not continue to rubber stamp the

President's ill-conceived war effort. Last November, the American

people spoke loudly and clearly, demanding a new direction to U.S.

foreign policy, and we here in Congress are committed to seeing that

change be brought about. We are working to see the extensive funds

currently being spent to sustain the war in Iraq go to important

domestic programs and to securing our homeland against real and

imminent threats.

President Bush and Vice President Cheney have been given numerous

chances and ample time by the American people and the Congress to

straighten out the mess in Iraq. They have failed. It is pure fantasy

to imagine that President Bush's military surge has created the

necessary safety and security to meet economic, legislative, and

security benchmarks. It is time for a new strategy, a new plan that

will encourage Iraqis to take charge of their own destiny, seek

constructive and sustained regional engagement, and substitute the ill-

advised military surge for a thoughtful diplomatic one. It is time to

be realistic and pragmatic, to recognize that our troops achieved what

they were initially sent in for and that continued U.S. military

engagement is not bringing about the desired results.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides our brave soldiers in Iraq

with the resources they need, while requiring that the President begin

to redeploy our troops. It keeps our soldiers safe, and it keeps our

Nation safe. By bringing an end to this conflict, this Democratic

Congress is making significant strides forward toward protecting and

securing America.

I strongly urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting today's

legislation, and in giving the troops the resources they need to safely

redeploy from Iraq.