Mr. Speaker, here we go again. It has actually been

several weeks now since we have had a meaningless vote on the issue of

Iraq, and so I suppose we are overdue for another one. This Democratic

leadership, Mr. Speaker, as we all know very well, still bereft of any

real ideas, has been forced once again to resort to demagoguery,

bringing up a bill that they know, they know full well, will not be

enacted into law. And knowing that their proposal cannot withstand any

critical scrutiny, they have once again shut down the process and

brought this to us under a completely closed rule, not allowing any of

the very thoughtful proposed alternatives to be considered whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Rules Committee, I offered an amendment

that would have allowed us to have the opportunity to substitute their

policy with the very thoughtful and responsible recommendations that

were included in this bipartisan Iraq Study Group package of

recommendations proposed by Mr. Baker and Mr. Hamilton, a group of

Democrats and Republicans, very respected, authorized by this Congress.

And they refused to allow us to have any opportunity whatsoever to even

debate, much less vote, on the issue of the Iraq Study Group

recommendations.

Now, just yesterday morning in an interview on National Public Radio,

our former colleague Mr. Hamilton, who, as I said, was the co-Chairman

of the Iraq Study Group, had a very eloquent and thoughtful interview

on the need for us to implement the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership, I guess fearful that

responsible policy would prevail and that this institution might, in

fact, pass the measure calling for implementation of the Iraq Study

Group, prevented us from having the chance to debate or vote on the

Iraq Study Group recommendations.

The last time we went through this charade, they at least had the

luxury of making dire predictions of failure for the new strategy in

Iraq led by General Petraeus, and the distinguished Chair of the

Committee on Rules once again basically talked about failure and said

that we haven't met any benchmarks. Even then, Mr. Speaker, the

strategy was actually showing early signs of success. But this time,

this time, the counterinsurgency offensive is well under way and making

clear and irrefutable progress.

I will say once again, Mr. Speaker, that we are seeing clear and

irrefutable progress taking place. As one major newspaper recently

editorialized, ``Demands for withdrawal are no longer demands to pull

out of a deteriorating situation with little hope. They are now demands

to end a new approach to this conflict that shows every sign of

succeeding.''

Mr. Speaker, U.S. forces, working side by side with Iraqi Army and

police forces, have penetrated enemy strongholds in the belt

surrounding Baghdad and are driving them out. They have cut off al

Qaeda's supply lines and transport routes. They are destroying car bomb

factories. Sectarian deaths have plummeted. Al Qaeda operatives are

finding themselves increasingly isolated, their safe havens destroyed,

and their ability to move freely between neighborhoods severely

diminished.

Mr. Speaker, our efforts have been significantly bolstered by former

Sunni insurgents who have joined the fight against al Qaeda. I am going

to say that again. Former Sunni insurgents have now joined our effort

in the fight against al Qaeda. Nowhere has this process been more

critical than in the al-Anbar province.

Last year, a leaked Marine intelligence report conceded this province

as completely lost. That was the report that came out. Today, Mr.

Speaker, al-Anbar is our best success story, and a template for U.S.

Forces working together with both Sunni police and Shia army forces to

combat al Qaeda.

General David Petraeus, the man who has received bipartisan praise

and was confirmed unanimously by a vote of 82-0 in the United States

Senate as he began his work, he said to the New York Post, ``We are

beginning to see a revolt of the middle against both extremes.''

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is our commanders on the ground who have

repeatedly pointed out that the tipping point didn't come until the

tribal leaders sought a prolonged offensive by U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Now, let's think back to what life was like in Iraq under Saddam

Hussein. After a quarter-century reign of terror by Saddam Hussein,

Iraqis clearly would not immediately rise up against any force until

that force has been driven into retreat. We had to demonstrate our

strength and our commitment before we earned the trust of the tribal

leaders and their support in the fight against al Qaeda. That is

exactly what we're doing today in Baghdad and the surrounding areas.

The New York Times recently reported on the Anbar success and how we

are currently applying it to the fight to secure Baghdad. According to

a July 8 report, former insurgents in Sunni neighborhoods of Baghdad

are now taking up arms against al Qaeda. Now, that is July 8th, a

report that came out just 4 days ago. Now, it quotes Petraeus as

saying, ``Local security is helped incalculably by local support and

local involvement.''

Now, Mr. Speaker, this success is so critical because it gets to the

heart, it gets to the very heart of our twin goals in Iraq. First, that

Iraqis will be able to provide their own security, that we have an

increased ISF, the Iraqi Security Forces, and that they are trained

adequately; and second, that this security will provide the environment

that makes a political solution possible.

The quicker that Iraqis achieve security and a peaceful, stable

democracy, the quicker our troops will come home. And as we listen to

the speeches that will come following mine about the quest for our

troops to come home, make no bones about it, I share the goal and the

vision that is put forth by our friends, Mr. McGovern and Ms.

Slaughter, and others, who will argue to bring our troops home. We all

want to make sure that that happens.

Our new strategy, Mr. Speaker, has clearly brought us closer to that

goal. And if our fight against extremism was not urgent enough, the

Associated Press report that came out just late yesterday afternoon

that al Qaeda's global network is again on the rise and has regained

much of the strength that it had in September of 2001 is an important

thing for us to recognize.

Mr. Speaker, as the terror network rebuilds and regroups, it seems

absolutely preposterous that we would abandon not only a key front in

the global war on terror, but a place where we have al Qaeda on the

defensive and where we are diminishing their capabilities, especially

in light of that report that came out just last night about their

renewed strength. Yet, the Democratic leadership inexplicably wants to

pull the rug out from under our military commanders. Well, Mr. Speaker,

perhaps not so inexplicable if we consider that their planned

withdrawal would be complete just in time for the 2008 elections.

But let's pretend that there is no election looming on the horizon

here. Regardless of this bill's impact on American electoral politics,

what would be the effects on Iraq? Now, Mr. Speaker, even the New York

Times editorial board, which apparently doesn't often read its own news

reports and is calling for an immediate withdrawal, acknowledges the

inevitable dire consequences of its recommended course of action. In

the very editorial calling for surrender, it outlines the overwhelming

refugee and humanitarian crisis that would immediately ensue, how the

fight would spill out all across the region. And Mr. Speaker, in the

most callous way, it acknowledges the terror that would be inflicted

upon

those Iraqis who worked with us because they believed our promises. How

cold and cynical. How callous can we be to stand here and debate the

notion of abandoning the Iraqi people, not only to genocide, but to the

targeting of the very individuals who have bravely worked with us.

The Democratic leadership wants to wave a magic wand and make this

war go away. I wouldn't mind a magic wand myself, and certainly the

American people would appreciate a quick and tidy solution. But I'm

afraid that this solution attempts to salvage nothing but party

politics. The Iraqi people, Mr. Speaker, would not be quite so lucky.

Furthermore, NPR recently reported that the quick withdrawal time

frame that the Democratic leadership dreamed up has no basis in

reality. It would take a year or more to safely withdraw all U.S.

troops from Iraq, and it would take significant combat forces to

protect the withdrawal. We would have to fight our way out all the way

to the Kuwaiti border. There simply is no magic wand in this war, Mr.

Speaker.

Perhaps the greatest irony of this bill is that it calls for detailed

reports for a strategy in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy, and

while it was only fully operational less than 1 month ago, it is

already succeeding. The Democratic leadership, in their absurdist

logic, want our military to abandon their strategy, go home and write a

report about what they would have wanted to accomplish if they had

stayed. And if that weren't cruel enough, Mr. Speaker, they would have

to watch terror and genocide unfold as they retreated. Now, I cannot

fathom a more disastrous policy for our security or the Iraqis'.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject this rule and the

underlying bill itself.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely laughable to listen to the

distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules, after having berated us

for the longest period of time, use us as a model for the procedure

around which we are considering this legislation. This is a bill, not a

resolution, which is what we brought up in the last Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 1/4 minutes to the very distinguished

gentleman, a former member of the Rules Committee, from Marietta,

Georgia (Mr. Gingrey).

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close the debate now, so I

yield myself the balance of the time.

Mr. Speaker, let me just begin by talking about procedure. We

continue

to hear the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules talk

regularly about an open amendment process, and I will say with absolute

certainty, I had the privilege of chairing the Rules Committee for 8

years, and I will tell you that we have brought more rules to the floor

of this House under a completely closed process during the first 7

months of this year than we did during any 7 months during the 8 years

that I was privileged to serve as chairman of the Rules Committee. So

much for a new and open process.

Now, let's look at what it is we're considering here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know full well that this is a bill, unlike resolutions

that may have been brought up under closed rules in the past, this is

actually a bill, a bill that's scheduled to go to the President's desk.

Everyone knows that this bill is not going to become law.

What we've found is gross politicization once again, a commitment

made that every week we're going to have some kind of vote on Iraq.

We all know that the war in Iraq is very unpopular. We know that the

President is a great punching bag on this for virtually everyone, but

the fact of the matter is we are in the midst of a very important

global war on terror, and as the President said in the past, you know,

we all like to be loved, but I'd much rather be right than be loved.

The fact of the matter is, we want to bring this war to an end. The

President stood right here in this chamber in January and said I wish

that this war were over and that we had won, but we need to ensure

victory. And, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we are not given the

opportunity to consider any thoughtful, bipartisan alternative to this

measure which calls for the withdrawal to begin within 120 days. I

mean, how crazy is that when we're looking for a report to come in

September and as we are looking at success that has begun even after

only 1 month, 1 month of this plan having been put into place under the

greatly heralded General David Petraeus?

Now, Mr. Speaker, as my friends from New Mexico and Michigan have

said, I'm going to move to defeat the previous question. I'm going to

move to defeat the previous question so that we can actually ensure

that we have the tools to win this war on terror. We've had a number of

anniversaries marked. We've spent a lot of time talking about them, but

we fail to remember the success that we've had at preempting attacks on

this country.

Just last month, we marked the first anniversary of the discovery of

the proposed attack on the Sears Tower and the FBI headquarters in

Miami.

Just last week, we marked the first anniversary of the proposed

attack on the plan to blow up the Hudson River tunnel between New

Jersey and Manhattan.

Just in May, we had a report of the plan, as you all know, to see

some of these people go in and start killing our people at Fort Dix in

New Jersey.

And then of course, just a few weeks ago, we had the plan to blow up

JFK International Airport.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been able to discover those, but we know

full well from those in our intelligence operations and the Department

of Homeland Security that we are, as Mr. Hoekstra said, blind and deaf,

and I believe that we need to make sure we defeat the previous question

so that we'll be in a position to amend this proposal so that we can

ensure that we have the tools necessary to win this war on terror.

So vote ``no'' on the previous question.