Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of this

bill and the effort by this Congress to bring accountability to the war

in Iraq.

This war is in desperate need of a new direction. For nearly 5 years,

our brave men and women have valiantly toed the line for this

administration, and I'm proud to say that they have had great successes

in their mission. We have seen a terrible dictator overthrown, tried

and put to death, and in his place the people of Iraq carried out free

and open elections. For all of this, we owe our soldiers and their

families a debt of thanks.

But today's debate is not about the purpose of this war. We are here

to make a decision on how best to bring accountability to this

engagement. Today's legislation will keep soldiers on the ground to

oversee diplomatic missions, protect U.S. citizens, equip and train

Iraqis to stand on their own and continue to engage in targeted attacks

on terrorists as we seek them out. This is a responsible strategy that

worked for Eisenhower in South Korea when troops remained to oversee

the DMZ after major operations had ended, and it can work for America

today in Iraq.

However, I have long felt that it is time to remove our men and women

from the kill zones of Iraq. Our soldiers are trained to do the job of

the United States military, not the job of police-on-the-beat for the

nation of Iraq. We need to redeploy our troops so they can continue to

carry out the work of defending America from terrorist threats around

the globe. It is time for the Iraqis to occupy their own country with

their own military and police force.

This bill begins the redeployment of our combat troops, while

continuing to fund initiatives for our men and women that protect them

from IEDs, traumatic brain injury and more. But the days of a blank

check from this Congress must come to an end. The American people

deserve a new direction in Iraq, and this legislation is an important

step.

I would like to add that I bristle when I hear the other side talk of

``cut and run'' Democrats. The legacy of the Democratic Party is one of

great wartime leaders. Andrew Jackson may have done the cutting at the

Battle of New Orleans, but it was Colonel Packingham who did the

running. It was President Wilson who convinced the American people to

take on the oppressors in the First World War. It was President

Roosevelt who said ``we have nothing to fear but fear itself'' before

leading the charge into the battlefields of Asia and Nazi Germany. And

it was President Truman who ended that war by dropping a nuclear

weapon.

I am a member of a Democratic Party that has never cut and run, but

has been responsible with our men and women in regard to their safety

and families, as well as our national security. We need a change in

Iraq and a change in course. This must happen.