Let me thank my colleague from Florida for yielding.

Let me just say that the gentleman from Wisconsin, the chairman of

the committee, is a Member that I know well and have great respect for,

and along with the gentleman from Florida and the gentleman from

Pennsylvania, they have spent over 30 years doing everything they could

to support our troops. But if you think that the debate that we are

having tonight is something that we have heard before, it is. Over 40

times this year, we have had votes and debates in this house on the

issue of Iraq.

Let me just say that my colleague from Wisconsin is known for his

famous statement about Members coming to the floor of the House posing

for ``holy pictures.'' Now, if there has ever been a case over my 17

years here in Congress of people posing for holy pictures, it is over

this issue of Iraq.

When I came to the Congress in 1991 as a brand new Member, my first

vote in this Chamber was on whether to go to war with the Iraqis in

Kuwait. I remember coming here as a brand new Member, Members in the

well of this House who had been here 30 and 40 years, tears in their

eyes, talking about this being the most difficult vote they had ever

cast. It was a very difficult moment for me and all of my colleagues.

But we went through that, and we went through it successfully.

So when we have the issue of war debated here on the floor of the

Congress, there is no issue, no issue that is more personal, no issue

that is of greater significance to our country, than all of us casting

our vote on sending our young men and women into battle anywhere

overseas. So I understand the passion that we have on both sides of the

aisle over this issue.

But I think we all have to understand that we are in Iraq for a very

important reason. We went there to get rid of Saddam Hussein. I think

everybody understands that. We went there to make sure that the weapons

of mass destruction were gone. They are gone. Where they went, I don't

think we will ever know. We went there to set up a democratically

elected government, and, frankly, we have succeeded.

It was al Qaeda 3 years ago that made Iraq the central front in their

war with us. We didn't start this war with al Qaeda. They did. And as

the gentleman from Florida pointed out earlier, it didn't start on 9/

11, it started back in the early eighties. And it persisted through the

eighties and the nineties, and America and the rest of the world looked

up, looked away, and just hoped the problem would go away.

Well, it didn't go away. After 3,000 of our fellow citizens died on

9/11, what was America to do? Look up, look away and just hope the

problem would go away one more time? No. So we went to Iraq. But it was

al Qaeda and it was Iran who have made this the central front in their

war with us.

America has no choice but to succeed in our efforts in Iraq. We all

know what failure in Iraq will bring. Failure in Iraq brings a

destabilization of Iraq itself, a safe haven for the terrorists to

operate from, a destabilization of the entire Middle East, the end of

Israel as we know it, and who doesn't believe that if we leave Iraq and

we leave in failure, that the terrorists don't follow us home and that

we have to deal with the problem here on the streets of America?

This is not what America wants. America wants us to succeed, and it

is success that we are having in Iraq. You all know the statistics. You

have all seen the headlines over the last several weeks and the last

several months. Our troops in Iraq are doing a marvelous job on our

behalf. They are succeeding. They are training the Iraqi Army to take

our place. The Iraqi Army is more

out in front than ever before. The amount of violence in Iraq is down

significantly. Our troops, our troops, are dying in less numbers each

and every day. Why? Because we are having success there.

So we ought to thank our troops, thank our troops for the great job

they are doing, because General Petraeus put forward a plan that is

working.

Now, I understand that a lot of my colleagues on the other side have

invested all their political capital over the course of this year in

failure in Iraq. It hasn't happened, thankfully, because for the good

of our Nation, not today, not tomorrow, maybe not next week, but for my

kids and their kids, success in Iraq is critically important. And I

think all the Members in this Chamber understand just how important

success is there. We are taking on an enemy that is growing in all

parts of the world, and if we are not willing to take them on in Iraq,

if we are not willing to draw the line and defeat them, where will we

draw the line? Where will we stand up for America, and where will we

stand up for American values? Iraq is the place to do it.

The bill that we have before us goes back to the same old tired plan,

the plan for failure, if you will. That is what the bill that we have

before us does. It ties the hands of the administration, it ties the

hands of our generals, it ties the hands of our people on the ground,

and it will lead to nothing other than failure.

We have been down this path. We have been down this path all year

long. And I will admit to my colleagues, we have had plenty of mistakes

that have been made in Iraq. There has never been a war when there

haven't been a lot of mistakes made. You can go back to the Civil War

and look at all the mistakes that were made. The First World War, the

Second World War, Vietnam, there were a lot of mistakes that got made

in wars, and mistakes have been made in this war.

But, ladies and gentlemen, you all know that we have no choice, no

choice, but to succeed, and the plan that we have before us, to fund

our troops for the next 4 months, will lead to nothing other than

failure.

So I am going to ask my colleagues, let's stop the political games.

We all know what is going on here. It is another political stunt,

another political stunt trying to trap the President, trying to trap

the generals and putting handcuffs on them. Let's stop it.

I think my colleagues on both sides of the aisle want us to succeed.

Instead of playing these political games, what we ought to be doing is

passing this bill cleanly. And we ought to be passing the Military

Quality of Life Veterans bill, because our troops are coming home. We

have got 3,000 troops that have been sent out of Diyala on their way

home. We are going to have troops coming home all year. And if we don't

pass the Military Quality of Life Veterans bill, the benefits they are

entitled to, the services we ought to be providing to those veterans

coming home will not be there.

So let's vote ``no'' on this bill. Let's find a way this week to make

sure that the veterans bill is up on this floor and passed and in the

President's hands.