I rise in strong opposition to this legislation,

the process that brought it here tonight, but not to the money that is

badly needed for our troops in the field.

For each of the last 3 years, the Defense appropriations bill, ably

led by Chairman Young and Chairman Murtha, has included a

straightforward bridge fund to cover the cost of ongoing operations in

Iraq and Afghanistan.

Indeed, the continuing resolution we passed last month gave our

military access to the bridge funding until November 16. This funding

allowed our warfighters, all volunteers, the ability to fuel their

Stryker vehicles and Humvees, restock their ammunition, resupply their

mess halls, power the systems that allow them to keep in touch with

their families at home, and even to ship their new MRAP vehicles to the

battle zone so they may be better protected from IEDs. And yes, protect

their fellow soldiers and innocent Iraqis.

But bowing to antiwar sentiment, the majority leadership pointedly

chose to keep this important bridge funding out of the defense bill

that we approved last week.

So while our brave warfighters are hard at work in Iraq in a hellish

environment, they find they have to watch their own backs from those in

Washington who want to choke off funding for their missions, both

military and humanitarian.

I submit that this deliberate attempt to starve our operations in

Iraq threatens the very safety of those troops and the lives of

hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis. No, Mr. Speaker, we should be

sending to the President a clean bridge fund that does not tie the

hands of commanders in the field and allows them to build on their

undeniable successes in recent months in Iraq. Cutting money does tie

their hands, limits those commanders' options, as does the setting of

date certain.

My colleagues, the ill-advised process this House started last week

is not without its costs. While Congress deliberately procrastinates,

and some say throws roadblocks in front of our brave warriors battling

violent international terrorists every day, military operations in Iraq

and Afghanistan will run out of money, causing the Department of

Defense to borrow from other important programs to support their

operations.

I am told this process could completely drain the Army's operations

and maintenance accounts by the end of next January.

In fact, it is my understanding that the Deputy Secretary of Defense

has warned that the military would have to start preparing in December,

next month, to close domestic military facilities, lay off civilian

workers, and delay contracts if the bridge funding is not provided.

This could have very damaging consequences for those communities

privileged to host a military installation.

Mr. Speaker, I am also troubled that this bill requires the

withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and slaps restrictions on the

mission of U.S. troops, again, both military and humanitarian.

This harkens back to what was recently described by the junior

Senator from Connecticut as the ``narrative of defeat and retreat.'' As

Senator Lieberman said yesterday, and I quote, ``Rather than supporting

General Petraeus and our troops in the field, antiwar advocates in

Congress are instead struggling to deny or disparage their

achievements, and are now acting, once again, to hold hostage the

funding our troops desperately need and to order retreat by a date

certain, regardless of what is happening on the ground.''

I would remind my colleagues that even the Iraq Study Group warned us

against setting arbitrary deadlines. We should let the troops and their

commanders do their work.

I have always maintained that our brave troops' service in Iraq

should be as short and as safe as possible. This legislation does

nothing to advance either of these goals. I urge rejection of this

bill.