Mr. Speaker, if today's actions by the House

are any indication, it appears that the Out of Iraq Caucus within the

Democratic majority is now running the legislative agenda of the

Congress.

How else can one explain that the rule governing consideration of

debate of funding of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan provides only

two legislative options with regard to U.S. troops in Iraq and

Afghanistan?

The first, which we are now debating, is an immediate withdrawal of

troops from Iraq. The second, which we will debate shortly, rations

funding to our troops over a 60-day period. Both options are short-

sighted, and they are also dangerous.

My colleagues, where did this bill come from?

I gather it was hastily written and introduced last night in an

attempt to obtain votes for the Obey Iraq supplemental we will be

considering a little later.

Indeed, the consideration of this withdrawal legislation is nothing

more than an attempt by the Speaker and the majority leader to appease

members of the Out of Iraq Caucus so they will support the second

version offered by Chairman Obey.

Once again, the majority has brought legislation to the House floor

under a closed rule without an opportunity for amendment or meaningful

debate. Not only is this an abuse of the legislative process, it is an

overt violation of the longstanding traditions of the House. The

majority is making a mockery of the time-honored customs of this body.

That, in and of itself, is shameful. It is the People's House and the

people of our country who suffer when open debate is stifled in order

to preordain a legislative outcome.

Fortunately, this legislation, which embraces surrender and defeat,

will not pass today. Most Members of the House, both Republican and

Democrats, have grave reservations about the manner in which this

legislation undermines our troops and the authority of the President

and the commander in chief.

Members on both sides of the aisle have expressed concern about the

effects of an ill-conceived military withdrawal. And Members are

rightfully concerned about any legislation that places military

decisions in the hands of politicians rather than the military

commanders in the field.

The last thing our country or our troops need is to have 535 Members

of the House and Senators micromanaging the war in Iraq. Recent history

reminds us that the enemy we face in Iraq, Afghanistan and other

countries that harbor terrorists, will stop at nothing to attack the

United States and our allies. They view the consideration of this

measure and the Obey bill we will consider shortly, as a sign of

weakness.

Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations are watching us closely,

hoping this lack of resolve will prevail. We must not let that happen.

My colleagues, now is not the time for the United States to back down

from its commitment to the war on terror. Now is not the time for

America to signal retreat and surrender. Indeed, now is not the time

for the House of Representatives to throw in the towel, wave the white

flag or signal retreat and surrender in Iraq.

How could this Congress walk away from our men and women in uniform?

How could we walk away from them now? We must, we must support our

troops. Our failure to learn the lessons of history, our failure to

lead will result in devastating consequences, including an even greater

loss of lives in the future.

It is absolutely essential that America, the last remaining

superpower on earth, continue to be a voice for peace and a beacon for

freedom in our shrinking world.

I urge my colleagues to vote ``no'' on the McGovern/Out of Iraq

Caucus bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.