Mr. Speaker, like H.R. 2237, this bill has

serious flaws. However, while I could not vote for H.R. 2237, which

would have required rapid withdrawal of troops from Iraq, I will vote

for this emergency supplemental appropriations bill.

I could not support H.R. 2237 for two reasons:

First, I do not support the idea of rigidly insisting on a date

certain for withdrawing U.S. combat troops from Iraq. I remain

convinced that we should steer clear of arbitrary public deadlines for

military actions and focus instead on realistic diplomatic and

political goals.

Second, I am very troubled by the provision that would prohibit

funding for troops described as being part of the ``surge.''

My concerns do not reflect support for the administration's strategy.

On the contrary, I still think an open-ended escalation--and that is

the reality behind the Administration talk about a ``surge''--is no

substitute for what is really needed, which is a strategy for

containing civil war and a wider regional war.

That is why in January, I voted against President Bush's plan to

increase the number of troops deployed in Iraq--a course he took

against the best advice of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, military

leaders, and other policy experts who have warned against extending our

military commitment in Iraq.

But now nearly 14,000 additional troops have been deployed, and I

think it would be irresponsible to vote to cut funding for their

weapons and equipment and for all they need to keep them alive and

fighting for our country in the midst of Iraq's civil war.

In short, while I remain convinced that it was a strategic mistake to

go to war in Iraq in the way that the Bush administration did, the fact

is that we are still deeply engaged there--and while our troops are in

the field, we must provide them what they need.

On the other hand, I will vote for H.R. 2206, the revised

Supplemental Appropriations bill, primarily for the same reason that I

voted for the previous supplemental appropriations bill.

I believe we must vote to provide America's men and women in uniform

with the equipment and resources they need and with the best health

care they may require when they come home. I think it would be grossly

irresponsible not to provide these resources.

And we must hold the president accountable to the benchmarks set by

his own administration and the Iraqi government--including enactment of

a hydro-carbon law; conducting of provincial and local elections;

reform of current laws governing the de-Baathification process;

amendment of the Constitution of Iraq; and allocation of Iraqi revenues

for reconstruction projects.

The bill seeks to hold the president accountable by ``fencing'' half

the funds until the Secretary of Defense reports on meeting the

benchmarks and Congress votes again to release the remaining funds.

I am not convinced that is a workable approach. But, I do not think

its effectiveness will be tested, because I do not think it will become

law in its present form--partly because the president has said he will

veto it if it should reach his desk and partly because every indication

is that the Senate will take a different approach.

Under these circumstances, I think the most important thing is for

the House to pass a supplemental appropriations bill today and then to

proceed to a conference with the Senate without further delay. I hope

that the result will be a bill that will both provide essential funding

for our troops and also hold the president accountable--but for that

hope to be realized, it is necessary for the House to act today, and so

I will vote for the supplemental appropriations bill now before us.