Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the

customary 30 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California

(Mr. Lewis), and pending that I yield myself such time as I may

consume.

Mr. Speaker, this issue before us is the kind of issue that the

Congress was designed to deal with. This Congress exists today because

in 1215, almost 800 years ago, our forefathers many times removed, by

adopting the Magna Carta, established for the first time in the

English-speaking world the principle that the monarch was not

unilaterally sovereign.

That expression wound up being turned into a reality for our country

in 1789, when the Constitution of the United States was adopted. That

Constitution created three coequal branches of government. It gave this

body, the legislative body, the Congress, the ability to declare war.

It certainly gave us the obligation to oversee the conduct of war. It

gave us the obligation to oversee the use of taxpayers' money in

dealing not just with war, but with every other issue as well.

The President yesterday vetoed the legislation now before us, which,

for the first time, had he chosen to use it, would have given him the

opportunity to have an exit strategy for a war that has brought

incredible frustration and agony not just on the people of Iraq, but

the people of our own country.

Now, the President has told the public that he is ``the decider.''

Well, he is a very important decider, but he is not the only decider in

a democratic form of government. The ultimate deciders are our

constituents, and we are elected to speak on their behalf and to

participate in that decisionmaking. That is what the Congress did when

it passed this legislation through both Houses.

I regret very much that the President did not use this legislation to

establish a bipartisan approach to the war which has plagued us now for

more than 4 years.

As we all know, yesterday was the fourth anniversary of the

President's landing on that aircraft carrier under the banner ``Mission

Accomplished'' and telling us that our troops had fulfilled their

mission. Indeed, they had;

our troops won the war in Iraq, but it is the White House, in its

pursuit of its Iraqi policy, it is the civilian leadership of the

Pentagon which systematically, especially in the early days, ignored

the judgment of the military that has brought us to the chaos that we

see in Iraq today.

Now, the legislation before us attempted to do a number of things. It

attempted to meet the financial needs of the budget in supplying our

troops with everything that they need. Secondly, it attempted to hold

the administration accountable and to hold the Iraqi Government

accountable for the actions that they have taken. And thirdly, it was

meant to provide the beginnings of an exit strategy from that civil

war. The President has decided to veto that legislation, and the

question before us now is whether we will override that veto or not.

The President said in his veto message yesterday that we had all too

many so-called nonrelated items in this bill, along with funding for

the troops in Iraq. I don't believe that the American people would

agree with the President that $1.8 billion for veterans health care,

$3.3 billion for defense health programs, $2.2 billion for additional

Homeland Security initiatives, $6.9 billion for Katrina recovery, $663

million to protect the country from the ravages of a potential world

flu pandemic, or $650 million to prevent kids from losing health

insurance is unnecessary funding. I think the American public

recognizes each of those as a legitimate expenditure of public funds.

I also think that the President has focused so much attention on

those items simply to divert public attention from the fact that this

bill is first, last and foremost about the war. It is about how we get

our troops out of the war. It is how we send a message to the Iraqi

politicians that our troops cannot be expected to accomplish the

compromises that only they can reach if that war is to be brought to a

conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge every Member of this House, regardless of

party, to vote to override the President's veto.

And I would point out to the President that we already have provided

for two major compromises in this legislation. When we first

established the Murtha principles for unit readiness, the White House

objected. And so we said, all right, we'll change that, we will give

the White House a waiver. When the White House objected to the

timetable that we laid out for withdrawal of our troops from that civil

war, again we compromised, and we said we will keep as hard deadlines

the deadlines by which we must begin that process of redeploying

troops, but we made the end date for the actual withdrawal of our

troops from combat in a civil war, we made those dates extremely

flexible in response to the President's views. So we have already

compromised on two very major items in this bill.

Now that the President has laid down his veto, it seems to me that he

has an obligation to lay on the table what compromises he is willing to

make in order to bring us together in pursuit of an exit strategy from

a war that we should never have gotten into in the first place.

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

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 1/2 minutes.

The gentleman expresses his concern about funding designated as

emergency spending. In fact, I would point out that the President

himself asked for the antiflu money that we put in this bill. The

President himself asked for that money 2 years ago as an emergency

request.

I would also note, since he has expressed concern about our

micromanaging the war, I would simply say we have had the

administration providing us with bad intelligence. We have had the

administration demonstrating bad judgment in saying we would be

welcomed with open arms. We have had them demonstrate bad judgment in

ignoring General Shinseki's warnings about the number of troops that

would be needed to pacify a postwar Iraq. We have seen bad judgment in

the President's refusal to talk to the Syrians and the Iranians. We

have seen bad judgment all across the board for the last 4 years. It

seems to me that we are badly in need of having some kind of management

to that war, and if it is not going to come from the executive branch,

then the only alternative is for the Congress to express its views.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from

Maryland, the majority leader, Mr. Hoyer.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

I would simply point out to the gentleman who just spoke that the

bill before us specifically allows our troops to continue to go after

al Qaeda in Iraq, even after they are repositioned out of fighting that

miserable civil war.

I would also simply say, the gentleman asks ``What do you think al

Qaeda thinks.'' I think al Qaeda wants us to stay in Iraq. It is clear

from the beginning that they were happy that we went there, that we got

sucked in there, because we have served as a recruiting poster for al

Qaeda. That is what al Qaeda thinks.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 20 seconds.

I would also observe that our soldiers don't have the power to

require Iraqi politicians to quit killing each other and make the

diplomatic and political compromises necessary to end this civil war.

Only Iraqi politicians have that, and we are trying to send them a

message with this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from

New Jersey (Mr. Andrews).

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman who just spoke said that

withdrawing from Iraq will destabilize the Middle East. The President's

policy has already destabilized the Middle East.

He says that this policy endorses failure. The fact is that the only

endorsement of failure comes on the part of those who will vote to

continue the President's existing policy, because the President's

policy in Iraq has been a 4-year failure.

We need a change in direction. The only question about the

President's policy is whether it will produce a disaster or whether it

will produce a catastrophe, and I am afraid it will produce the latter.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield the remainder of my time to the gentleman

from Pennsylvania (Mr. Murtha).