Mr. Speaker, the President is making a terrible and

costly mistake by vetoing the war funding bill and rejecting the clear

desire of Congress and the country for a swift redeployment of U.S.

ground forces from Iraq.

The veto and the insistence on staying the course is not a mistake

simply because it ignores public opinion; we wouldn't want a Commander-

in-Chief to be simply a weather vane.

And it is not a mistake just because our courageous troops and

military families are exhausted from bearing the full weight of

sacrifice themselves. We know they are prepared to pay any price for

American security, which is why we owe them such a debt of gratitude.

No, the President's veto is a grave mistake because refusing to

change course in Iraq is compromising U.S. security.

Administration rhetoric notwithstanding, policing the civil war in

Iraq does not bring us closer to defeating the global network of

extremists who wish to harm us. To the contrary, in order to improve

national security and best address our other strategic interests around

the world and here at home, we must dramatically change our current

direction in Iraq.

Our men and women in uniform have always served our country

courageously and performed brilliantly. But asking them to stand

between warring factions is not only unfair, it is counterproductive.

Redeployment from Iraq will enhance our security by allowing us to

properly address other potential challenges around the world from

Afghanistan, North Korea, and Iran to Latin America, the Horn of

Africa, and the greater Middle East. In particular, it will allow us to

put our attention back on Afghanistan and the fight against a resurgent

al Qaeda and Taliban, the enemies who actually did engineer 9/11.

Bringing troops home also allows us to resolve the concerns about the

readiness of our Armed Forces, which have been strained to the breaking

point because of this Administration's careless management of the war

in Iraq.

Only by extricating ourselves from the mess of Iraq can we begin

moving our country back to a common-sense policy of strength through

leadership. Every day our military is in Iraq our standing in the

international community erodes further.

Already we've seen respect for the United States plunge from record

highs after 9/11 to record lows now. This loss of moral authority

compromises our ability to lead multinational efforts to fight national

security threats from terrorism and nuclear proliferation to global

warming and drug trafficking.

Our continuing military involvement in Iraq carries these steep costs

with little prospect of benefit. Only the Iraqis can bring about the

needed reconciliation in their country. Their political leaders must

take the difficult political steps needed to cease the violence in

their country, by building coalitions among competing sects, ensuring

minority rights, balancing power between provincial and central

governments, and sharing oil revenues among all regions in Iraq. We

simply cannot do this work for them.

By setting a deliberate timetable for redeployment, we force the

Iraqi political leaders to acknowledge and accept that they are the

ones who must take steps to bring about an end of the sectarian

violence.

Bad things may happen when our Armed Forces leave Iraq if the Iraqis

cannot or will not choose reconciliation over conflict. But that will

be true if we leave at the end of this year, the end of next year, or

in 2015. Delaying redeployment simply delays the Iraqis' moment of

responsibility.

Our strong leaders of the last century, like Presidents Roosevelt,

Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan, recognized that while American military

might was important, American values were our greatest strength.

Just as we rallied the world in the Second World War and defeated the

Soviets in the Cold War on the strength of our Nation's democratic

ideals, ultimate victory against this generation of enemies will

similarly be won in the minds of millions around the world, not on the

battlefield in Iraq or anywhere else. Indeed, that long-term victory is

impossible while we are in the middle of Iraq's civil war.

There is no easy solution to the problems in Iraq, but it would be

irresponsible to push a difficult decision off to another day, another

Congress, or another President. We must stand firm and hold the Iraqi

leaders responsible for their country. It is time for the United States

to turn its attention to its broader global security and redeploy from

Iraq.