Madam Speaker, today Iraq remains the most important

issue facing our Nation. The American people want congressional action

in a bipartisan fashion. The rhetoric of the last 6 months has left the

American people saddened that the work on this

House floor has been focused upon partisan division. The most important

action this House of Representatives could take today is to support our

troops by coming together in a bipartisan effort.

I want to thank Chairman Skelton, and I also want to thank

subcommittee Chairman Abercrombie for his leadership on H.R. 3087,

which gives us an opportunity for a bipartisan step in the Iraq debate.

I am a cosponsor of this bill, which was reported out of the Armed

Services Committee by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 55-2.

H.R. 3087, as amended, supports our troops, our national interests,

and our counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda in Iraq.

The bill requires our Department of Defense to undertake robust and

comprehensive contingency planning for a redeployment of the Armed

Forces from Iraq. The bill recognizes that the role and mission of our

Armed Forces in Iraq will change and properly acknowledges that the

Government of Iraq must be responsible for Iraq's future.

As America's responsibilities shift, our focus must include planning

to protect our vital national interests and our troops.

In a letter I sent to our Speaker, Speaker Pelosi, on August 1, 2007,

I elaborated saying that, for example, this bill states the contingency

planning element should include ensuring appropriate protection for the

Armed Forces in Iraq, providing appropriate protection in Iraq for

United States civilians, contractors and third-party nationals, and

Iraqi nationals who have assisted the United States mission in Iraq,

maintaining and enhancing the ability of the United States Government

to eliminate and disrupt al Qaeda, and affiliated terrorist

organizations and preserving military equipment necessary to defend the

national security interests of the United States.

I want to thank Chairman Abercrombie for his leadership on this bill

and for his insistence that this bill come to the House floor for a

vote. I urge all of my colleagues in the House to support this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.