I thank the distinguished gentleman from Ohio for

yielding and for his work on this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3087, legislation

requiring the administration to work closely with Congress and our

military leaders in communicating a comprehensive post-surge strategy

for Iraq.

Since 2003, over 3,800 American military personnel have been killed

in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and more than 27,000 have been injured.

These are very difficult times, and it is our duty to do everything

possible to support those who have risked so much in service to their

Nation.

To this point, however, the U.S. Congress has been consumed by

partisan infighting, which has resulted in gridlock and has prevented

debate on substantive proposals like the Iraq Study Group

Recommendations Implementation Act.

The American people deserve a straightforward understanding of our

involvement and long-term objectives in the Middle East. The

legislation before us today, of which I am a proud cosponsor, takes an

important step forward by requiring the Secretary of Defense to submit

regular reports to Congress regarding the status of post-surge

planning.

Clearly, the U.S. Congress should not be acting without considering

the advice of our military commanders in Iraq, and this legislation

will ensure that Secretary Gates, General Petraeus and other senior

officials are capable of communicating developments with Members of

Congress and the administration.

This information will also provide a greater understanding of

progress made on General Petraeus' proposal for the redeployment of

U.S. troops, and it will assist Congress in budgeting for the possible

missions that may continue in Iraq, such as efforts to disrupt

terrorist organizations and train Iraqi security forces.

H.R. 3087 is the first of what I hope will be a substantive,

bipartisan effort in Congress to work with our military and foreign

policy leaders to achieve stability in Iraq and bring our soldiers home

to their families.

Last week, 14 Democrats and 14 Republicans endorsed such an approach

by signing the Bipartisan Compact on Iraq Debate. Like Mr. Tanner's

proposal, the importance of developing a clearly defined and measurable

mission in Iraq is one of eight central principles agreed to in the

Bipartisan Compact.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that by finally agreeing to consider H.R.

3087, Members from both parties will signal a willingness to set aside

the partisan tactics that have crippled our efforts over the last

several months.

The Iraq war provokes intense and genuine feelings from individuals

at all points of the political spectrum. However, politics as usual in

Washington, D.C. should not be allowed to consume our efforts in lieu

of progress.

Bridging this critical political divide in Washington is our only

hope for transitioning responsibility to the Iraqi Government and

bringing about real substantive change in Iraq.

Let us all join together to support H.R. 3087.