Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also add my thanks to Mr.

Abercrombie and Mr. English and Mr. Castle, Ms. Schwartz, and

particularly to

you, Mr. Chairman. The point of this is that our soldiers, sailors,

airmen, guardsmen, marines, are not dying in the name of the Republican

Conference or the Democratic Caucus. They're dying in the name of the

United States of America. We owe them a unified Congress to help them.

This bill is a unifying factor here that starts us on the road to

behaving as Americans first and political partisans second. Their

sacrifice demands nothing less than that.

I have a sense of urgency about this that I'm afraid did not come

through in the hearing, particularly from Ambassador Crocker. Not that

I'm criticizing him. I think he's doing a fine job. And I have no

higher regard for anybody in uniform, past, present or future, than

General Petraeus. But the sense of urgency I have is to bring us

together so that we can move in a meaningful, constructive way, as

Congress, to play a role in the civilian leadership aspects and

management of this conflict.

As has been noted previously, it requires the Pentagon to, in some

way, bring Congress in in a meaningful way really on the strategy of

the war for the first time.

As I said earlier today, the strategy of waiting for the Shia and

Sunni in Iraq to try to work, sit down and work something out in a

central government in Baghdad is a less than viable option when our men

and young men and women are patrolling the streets of Baghdad dying

every day and we're asking the taxpayers of this country to spend $3

billion a week for people who half the time boycott their sessions. And

to say that we're going to do this until maybe they can get together is

not, in my judgment, something that we can endorse.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the original authorization, which provided

basically two things, one is to remove the threat posed by the then-

Government of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, who has been captured, tried,

convicted and executed, and to enforce the U.S. resolutions with

respect to the weapons of mass destruction having been accomplished,

it's not the war that we haven't won; it's the peace that we're having

trouble with. And I want us to get together as a Congress to move

forward to win the peace. That's what our mission is now.

And the strategic mission that the administration had been following,

the civilian leadership is not working out too well; 4\1/2\ years

later, one can't leave the Green Zone without getting one's head shot

off. I think we need the Congress to engage in a constructive,

meaningful way. I think this vehicle will allow that to happen. And

therefore, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and all of those people

who had anything whatsoever to do with it. A big bipartisan vote today,

I think, will begin this unification process we so desperately need in

this country.