Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong

support of H.R. 3087, the Tanner-Abercrombie-English Iraq planning

bill. And I want to thank my two colleagues at the front end of that

title, particularly, for their extraordinary efforts to move this bill

forward.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that Congress speak with a clear voice

on Iraq. The American people need to know that their representatives

are trying to seek out the best policy to protect American interests

overseas and reduce our footprint in that troubled country.

The Iraqi Government needs to know that the U.S. Congress is not

prepared for our Nation to carry the burden of defending Iraq's

security indefinitely and that that must become an Iraqi undertaking.

Our allies need to know that we remain committed to the war on

terror, and that although Congress may be deeply divided on the means

to pursuing our goal, that ultimately, politics ends at the water's

edge.

This bill sends important signals. It sends a signal to our troops

that their deployment is purposeful and that we're prepared to respond

to changing conditions.

It sends a strong bipartisan message that Congress is ready to

respond to changing circumstances on the ground and recognizing the

coming and necessary transition of our role in Iraq from combat

operations to strategic support.

Secretary Gates has already acknowledged that DOD would have little

difficulty complying with the terms of this bill, so this legislation

simply calls on the administration to make transparent the planning

processes that prudent military leaders would undertake normally as a

matter of course.

Our legislation is a very simple bill, but it is still significant.

H.R. 3087 has gained support from a broad spectrum of Members of this

body, Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives. It cleared

the Armed Services Committee with overwhelming bipartisan support.

I encourage my colleagues to use this important bill as a launching

pad for a new debate in the House on how we may find a new way forward

in Iraq, while keeping faith with our troops, with our constituents,

with our allies, with the Iraq nation and with all who stand for order

and democracy in the face of the creeping menace of terrorism.

The message we send today will be heard in our hometowns, on the

battlefields of Iraq, and all around the world. That message is that we

in this Chamber are prepared to stand together to do what it takes to

forge a strong, sustainable and bipartisan U.S. policy in Iraq.