Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that this is a

difficult day for me.

I voted against this war from the very beginning when this vote was

not politically popular. I was an original member of the Out of Iraq

Caucus.

As far back as 2005 I introduced legislation to end funding for the

war, which I believe has been one of the worst political, military,

diplomatic and moral blunders in our Nation's history.

My bill calls for the immediate, safe and orderly withdrawal of all

of our troops from Iraq, and I urge my colleagues to join me in that

legislation.

I want this war to come to an end today. Unfortunately, and to my

deep disappointment, not enough of my colleagues, Democrat or

Republican, believe as I do.

I have come to the conclusion that defeating the supplemental bill

before us today would send a message to George Bush and Dick Cheney

that they will continue to have a free pass

from this Congress to do whatever the hell they want to do.

The Bush administration, with their ``Mission Accomplished'' banners

and their shifting rationales, must be held to account. We simply

cannot trust them any longer. I lost my trust in this administration a

long, long time ago.

I fear that defeating this bill would result in more of the same,

more deceit and empty promises, more ignored benchmarks and missed

deadlines, more American casualties, more debt passed on to our

children and our grandchildren, more harm to our reputation around the

world, and more war.

I cannot do that. I will not do that. So I will vote ``yes.''

This is not the bill that I want. This is not the bill that I would

have written. But it is the bill that the Appropriations Committee has

presented to us today, and it is a bill that reflects the hard reality

that this is the toughest measure that we can get passed and get 218

votes for.

For the first time, we can mandate real and meaningful deadlines that

clearly reflect the disgust so many of us have with how this war has

been conducted.

This bill also provides $1.7 billion to address the health care needs

of our veterans, particularly those suffering from traumatic brain

injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. Too many of our veterans

can't even get diagnosed, let alone treated. That is wrong, and this

bill begins to fix it.

Quite frankly, I have concluded that this bill is the best that we

can do, for now. I say that very deliberately, ``for now,'' because

those of us who oppose this war will continue our efforts to end it. I

want all of our troops out of Iraq and back home with their families

where they belong.

I will propose much stronger language and, indeed, continue to press

for the immediate withdrawal of all of our troops in the defense bills

that are coming in the weeks ahead.

My old boss, Joe Moakley, stares at me from his portrait every day in

the Rules Committee. He used to say that if the Democratic Party were

in Europe, we would be 16 different parties.

So I want to just take a moment to commend the leadership of Dave

Obey and Jack Murtha and Steny Hoyer, Jim Clyburn and Rahm Emanuel for

all of their hard work these past few weeks. They have anguished over

this issue, as all of us have.

And I especially want to commend our Speaker, Nancy Pelosi. She has

been a forceful and effective opponent of this war from the very

beginning, and I know she will continue to do all that she can to bring

all of us, Republicans and Democrats, together to finally bring this

terrible war to an end.

I am grateful to my colleagues in the Out of Iraq Caucus for their

continued and forceful leadership. And I also want to thank all of the

national and grass-roots activists and organizations who have done so

much to oppose this war. I truly believe that the American people are

way ahead of the politicians in Washington on this issue, and it is my

hope that someday soon Congress and the White House will catch up.