Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for

yielding me time and her leadership on the committee.

Mr. Speaker, this Congress is on the cusp of an historic step, a

first step to changing Iraq policy, enacting a fixed timetable to bring

our troops home. The bill made in order under this rule is not perfect,

but it deserves our strong support because it offers us our best chance

at forcing a change of direction in Iraq after 4 long years of

mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, I opposed this war from the beginning, and I believe we

must bring our troops home soon and in a responsible way. The

President's reckless insistence on sticking to a failed policy in Iraq

underlines the need for Congress to show leadership. This legislation

gives us the chance for the first time to take a concrete step towards

bringing the war to a close.

This bill does not go as far as I would like. I support a more rapid

redeployment of our troops from Iraq. I also strongly believe the

President should not be allowed to waive the legislation's troop

readiness requirements. But it has become clear in recent weeks that

this is the most aggressive approach that can obtain the necessary

votes to pass this House. That is the reality here. This is, after all,

the legislative branch. That means we can't change the policy if we

can't pass the bill.

Enacting a fixed timetable to bring our troops home is a very

significant leap forward in our Iraq policy. It provides a foundation

for further action and increases pressure on the President. That is why

the President opposes it so strongly. Defeating this bill would

ultimately play into the President's hands, resulting in the eventual

passage of a blank-check bill that places fewer restraints on the

President.

Ultimately Congress faces a choice: Do we set a timetable to bring

the troops home while providing for the troops in harm's way, or do we

give the administration a blank check for a war without end?

I choose to begin steps to end the war. For that reason I urge all

Members to support the rule and the underlying bill.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady from New York, the distinguished

chairman of our committee, Ms. Slaughter for the time and for her

leadership.

Mr. Speaker, in the next twenty-four hours, this Congress will

undertake a historic first step to changing our Iraq policy.

The bill made in order under this rule is not a perfect bill. But it

deserves our strong support because it will bring a critical change of

direction in Iraq after four long years of mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, I opposed this war from the beginning. And I believe we

must bring our troops home soon and in a responsible way. Our men and

women in uniform have done everything we have asked of them.

They have endured multiple deployments and extended separation from

their loved ones. They have followed orders into combat often without

the proper body armor or equipment.

These are signs of an inexcusable lack of leadership from the

President. Rather than change direction, the President has chosen to

send tens of thousands of additional troops to Iraq.

This goes against the advice of his generals . . . against the advice

of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group . . . and against the expressed

wishes of the voters.

The President's reckless insistence on sticking to a failed policy in

Iraq underlines the need for Congress to show leadership.

I support Congress taking firm steps to change our Nation's direction

in Iraq. And I have cosponsored legislation to establish a timetable

for redeployment of our troops.

As I said at the beginning, Congress has a historic opportunity to

demonstrate its responsible leadership with this bill. And that's the

prism through which I evaluate my vote this week.

The decision comes down to this--do we want to enact a bill that has

flaws but does contain a fixed timetable to bring our troops home? Or

do we want to vote down the fixed timetable and endorse President

Bush's ability to continue to wage this war without any limits?

This bill does not go as far as I would like. I support a more rapid

redeployment of our troops from Iraq. I also strongly believe the

President should not be allowed to waive the legislation's troop

readiness requirements.

Because of his gross mismanagement of the conflict, I believe the

President has abdicated any right to deference on that front.

Having said that, it has become clear in recent weeks that this is

the most aggressive approach that can obtain the necessary votes to

pass the House of Representatives.

That is disappointing to me, but that is the reality here. This is,

after all, the legislative branch. That means we can't change the

policy if we can't pass the bill.

Enacting a fixed timetable to bring our troops home is a very

significant leap forward in our Iraq policy. It provides a foundation

for further action and increases pressure on the President. That is why

the President opposes it so strongly.

To defeat this bill would result in the eventual passage of a blank

check bill that places even fewer responsibilities on the President.

I believe it is simply unacceptable to give the President permission

to mismanage the war as he chooses.

Ultimately, Congress faces a choice: Do we set a timetable to bring

the troops home while providing for our troops in the field at every

moment?

Or do we give the Administration a blank check for a war without end?

I believe Congress must choose the former.

This legislation, whatever its flaws may be, enacts a timetable to

bring our troops home while giving them the resources they need for

protection while they are still in harm's way. For that reason, I am

voting yes on the supplemental appropriations bill.

I urge all Members to support the rule and the underlying bill.