Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this rule and

the underlying bill.

It is the responsibility of this Congress, ladies and gentlemen, to

demand accountability from this President and insist on concrete

results from the Iraqi Government. Ladies and gentlemen, our troops are

laying their lives on the line every single day. The least we can do is

demand and require Iraqi accountability. This bill embraces that

responsibility and sets the stage for handing over control of security

of Iraq to the Iraqis.

It is also the responsibility of this Congress to provide our troops

with the resources they need to do their jobs. And let there be no

confusion. This bill provides full funding for our men and women in

uniform, who continue to serve the country with great courage and

dedication.

This bill also provides $1.7 billion in new funding for veterans'

health care, something that is direly needed. The state of veterans'

health care in America is in crisis, and our troops deserve better.

In addition, this bill will help us refocus our efforts on those who

attacked us on September 11 by increasing funding for the war against

al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

It is deeply troubling to me that this war in Iraq has undermined our

efforts to address the urgent threats in the war on terror. After

failing to kill Osama bin Laden when we had the chance at Tora Bora,

the administration turned its attention to Iraq, allowing the Taliban

to regain lost ground in Afghanistan.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, our goals in Iraq must reflect reality. For far

too long Congress served as nothing more than a rubber stamp for this

President's disastrous policy in Iraq. Those days, Mr. Speaker, are

over. Iraq has descended into a bloody civil war that cannot be

resolved by the American military. Even our military commander in Iraq,

General Petraeus, has said there is no military solution to this

conflict.

The Sunni-Shia divide goes back 1,400 years. America alone cannot

reverse 14 centuries of division and hate.

I support the rule, and I support the underlying bill.