Madam Speaker, I applaud the gentleman from Illinois

(Mr. Kirk) for spending an hour, although I do not quite agree with

some of the facts that the gentleman stated.

Madam Speaker, on that I echo the kudo.

I am joined tonight by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee). I

anticipate that we will be shortly joined by two other colleagues, the

gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. Abercrombie) as well as the gentleman from

Ohio (Mr. Strickland), for another session that we have labeled as Iraq

Watch to discuss issues concerning the Middle East with a particular

focus on Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war on terror.

There is much to talk about tonight. I do not think an hour will be

sufficient. I also should mention over the course of the past 8 months,

and we have been doing this for approximately 8 months now, I know that

the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee) and the other Members

involved have received a number of calls, e-mails, correspondence from

not just our own constituents but from all over the country. There is

one question that is constantly asked, and that is why is the House

empty at this hour of the night.

I think we should explain to those viewing this evening that the

legislative business of the House of Representatives has been concluded

for the day and we are now into a phase that is called Special Orders.

Each side of the aisle, Republicans and Democrats, are allocated an

hour, actually two hours, to just have a conversation or make a

presentation about issues that they have a particular interest in or

issues which they feel the American people need more information on. I

am sure many who watch C-SPAN note that during the course of the debate

on particular proposals, the time is very limited, given the numbers of

Members that wish to speak. In fact, the usual course allows for at

most a maximum of some 5 minutes for each Member to speak. On those

issues that have a particular interest on both sides of the aisle, what

occurs is the individual Member who happens to be managing the bill,

either Republican or Democrat, is responsible for allocating time and

often rather than 5 minutes, the likelihood is that a Member will only

have 2 or 3 minutes to explain his or her perspective on a particular

issue.

So this phase is called Special Orders. Earlier there were three of

our friends and colleagues from the Republican side who discussed the

budget. Prior to their coming to the floor, three or four Democratic

Members spoke about the budget and the perspective of Democrats as to

the proposal put forth by the Republican Party, and also clearly an

alternative that will be presented by the Democrats in terms of the

debate on where we go as far as a Nation is concerned, because in many

respects the budget does reflect our values. And as Members heard

earlier from our colleagues on the Republican side, there is a growing

and profound concern about the escalating deficit that has been brought

about by the actions of this particular administration and this

Republican majority in both the House and the Senate.

I think it is important that the American people remember that the

Republican Party controls the House of Representatives, controls the

United States Senate, and obviously the current incumbent in the White

House is a Republican. So when we speak of deficits, this is a deficit

that was engendered by the majority party in this country. I know the

Democrats are extremely concerned about the deficit because the

interest that is paid on the national debt detracts from other

investments that could be made in a wide variety of initiatives such as

infrastructure, education, health care, and a long litany of issues

that I believe are a priority to the American people.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. Inslee).

I think it is important to remember that when the

Director of the CIA testified recently before

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he acknowledged that on several

occasions he privately spoke to both the President and on multiple

occasions spoke to the Vice President about errors that they had made

in terms of misstatements, let us use that term for the moment,

misstatements, yet we have heard nothing specifically from the Vice

President. And the gentleman alluded to the incident earlier, being

forthright with the American people that subsequently he received

information from George Tenet in private that corrected a public

statement that he had made, and yet he does not acknowledge that today

publicly.

I think that we should remind the audience that the

gentleman from Hawaii has just joined us. In terms of what Mr. Clarke

testifies to tomorrow, I think we should suspend our judgment tonight.

One grand jury that we are aware of.

Does this come as a surprise to the gentleman?

Let us be honest among ourselves and with those people that are

viewing. If the gentleman remembers, it was the Bush-Cheney campaign

that back in 2000 during the primary season, there was an ad that ran

in New York. It was a 60-second radio spot in the days before the

primary which was March 7 of 2000.

Let me just give the gentleman a condensed version of that ad:

Hello. My name is Geri Barish and I am a breast cancer survivor. It

is a woman introducing herself to the listening audience. Like many, I

had thought of supporting John McCain in next week's presidential

primary. So I looked into his record.

What I discovered was shocking. John McCain opposes many projects

dedicated to women's health issues.

It's true. McCain opposes funding for vital breast cancer programs

right here in New York. John McCain calls these projects just ``garden

variety pork.'' That's shocking.

The truth, of course, was that Senator McCain did not vote against

this bill because of the breast cancer projects, but because it was a

military spending bill that did not provide adequate increases, in his

judgment, for our troops.

If I can, what I am going to do is what is rather

boldly stated here on the cover of Time magazine in February, when the

question is posed, and I would suggest that the question is now being

posed in very real terms as we witness the string of revelations that

are occurring now on an everyday basis: Believe Him Or Not: Does Bush

Have a Credibility Gap?

This is about credibility. It is not just about the President,

because the President speaks for the United States. The President's

credibility becomes our credibility. Not Republican credibility, not

Democratic credibility, but the credibility of the United States in a

very dangerous moment in world history, when we are all united to

defeat terrorism.

There was a fascinating story in my hometown paper, the Boston Globe,

this morning. I think it is worthy to present it to the gentleman

tonight and to have the viewing audience listen.

The former chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq warned yesterday that

the United States is in grave danger of destroying its credibility at

home and abroad if it does not own up to our mistakes in Iraq.

That is David Kay. That is the individual who universally has

received praise and respect from policymakers and people involved in

this particular issue. He was appointed by this White House, this

administration, to lead a team to go to Iraq and determine whether

there were weapons of mass destruction. It is he now that is imploring

this White House, this President, this Vice President, to use his

words, to ``come clean with the American people'' because, as he points

out, the cost of our mistakes with regard to the explanation of why we

went to war in Iraq are far greater than Iraq itself. This issue is so

profound that it is now the credibility of the United States, the

prestige that we have earned through decades, through the centuries,

that is at risk.

``We are in grave danger of having destroyed our credibility

internationally and domestically with regard to warning about future

events. The answer is to admit you were wrong, and what I find most

disturbing about Washington is the belief you can never admit you are

wrong.''

It is like I indicated earlier, there have been newspaper reports

that the director of the CIA, Mr. Tenet, privately corrected the Vice

President on his statements linking Saddam Hussein to al Qaeda. And yet

the Vice President has not had the decency to come forward to the

American people and say, I was wrong, when I was wrong.

And in another interview Mr. Kay goes on, and when asked what his

opinion was of the statement of Vice President Cheney that weapons of

mass destruction might still be found in Iraq, his response was, ``What

worries me about Cheney's statements is I think people who hold out for

a Hail Mary pass delay the inevitable looking back at what went

wrong.'' That is what this 9/11 commission is hearing this week. The

message that we send out to the rest of the world is that we are strong

and a mature democracy if we tell the truth, and we will not have a

credibility gap.

I believe we have enough evidence now to say that the intelligence

process and the policy process obviously crafted by the President,

President Bush, and Vice President Cheney that used that information

did not work at the level of effectiveness that we require in the age

we live in. I mean, this is absolutely the most profound issue, in my

judgment, that is currently confronting the United States with long-

term implications.

Madam Speaker, but these are all actions that are

directed at individuals. And I abhor them, and somebody should be held

responsible. It is as if there is another enemies list.

The gentleman alluded earlier to the Nixon years. There is something

Nixonian about targeting individuals, attacking them, attacking them at

a personal level, and clearly trying to undermine their professionalism

and hurt their careers. We have seen it again and again.

I began earlier with the radio spot that was used during the course

of the Presidential election, the one that was masterminded obviously

by Karl Rove, who is the political adviser and I am sure consults with

the President on a regular basis. But the gentleman talked about former

Secretary O'Neill. Mr. Clarke now. What happened to General Shinseki

when he suggested that there was need for 2 to 300,000 troops if the

peace was to be won in Iraq? He was castigated in an extremely

dismissive way by Under Secretary Paul Wolfowitz.

Madam Speaker, again as I indicated, I sympathize with

these individuals, and I am confident that as time moves on, because

America is truly about, at its essence, the search for the truth, that

they will be vindicated. What I would submit is that time is

vindicating them now, whether it be Mr. Clarke or whether it be David

Kay.

Hans Blix. They are all being vindicated. But really

what is at stake here is the prestige and the credibility of the United

States.

We heard a lot in the debate last week about appeasement. There is no

appeasement when it comes to terrorism. We are all united, Republican,

Democrat. I cannot imagine one Member of this House not being adamant

that we pursue justice and that we win the war on terror. But if we

continue to have our credibility undermined by this White House, we

risk losing the war on terror.

Let us hope that they listened to David Kay, who is

imploring them to come clean with the American people. It is so

important, because, well, let us look at the most recent example.

If we are serious about the war on terrorism, we need to have the

respect and cooperation and commitment of the entire world. If you

remember, in the aftermath of September 11 there was information that

came pouring into the United States about al Qaeda cells in some 60

different countries. In fact, we heard there were dozens of al Qaeda

cells operating right here in the United States.

What is happening now? The most recent statement by one of those

nations that actually participated and has a number of troops in Iraq

today, and I refer to the Polish nation, their President said, ``We

were misled. They took us for a ride.'' That is his quote.

The Spaniards, we are castigated by our friends for appeasement. I

thought that was rather arrogant, considering the fact that the Spanish

have dealt for years attempting to rid their nation of the terrorists

who claim to be seeking independence, the so-called ETA.

I found very interesting in the aftermath of the election in Spain

that the new leader there declared that his most immediate priority

will be to fight terrorism. There was a disagreement that Iraq was a

distraction, that we went after the wrong enemy. And more and more

people are coming to that belief.

The South Koreans just this past week indicated that they did not

want their troops transported to a venue that would most likely create

a potential where they would be engaged in violence.

The problem is, this is not about appeasement; this is about

credibility in winning the war on terror.

Do you find it interesting that in the United Kingdom,

and I disagreed with the Prime Minister there, Tony Blair. As you know,

I voted against the resolution authorizing military action against

Iraq. But I respect Tony Blair. He went before the Parliament, and for

hour after hour after hour stood his ground in a respectful fashion and

answered each question that was posed to him.

There is a commission going on right now. I would hope that the

President would reconsider and go before that commission, not behind

closed doors, but for the American people to hear, so that the

credibility not just of President Bush and Vice President Cheney, but

the credibility of the United States can be restored and replicate

exactly what the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom did in response

to questions about the British role in Iraq.

Well, you know, again if I can take the time for just a

moment, what I would propose, because I understand that the 9/11

commission that is currently sitting here today has agreed to, and I

think mistakenly, has agreed to a 1-hour interview with President Bush,

and only two members of the commission are going to be entitled to

inquire of him. That just simply continues to raise questions. It will

be interpreted as a lack of being forthcoming.

What is necessary now, more than ever, as David Kay has said, let us

open up. We are a democracy. I would go so far as a Democrat to suggest

that the former President, President Clinton, and President Bush, go

before that commission, one after another, sequentially, and stay there

as long as there are questions to be asked regarding terrorism and the

threat of terrorism to the United States. I would issue a challenge to

both of them. Make it a bipartisan challenge. We have to take this out

of the political realm.

Yes, I am not naive; I know there is a Presidential election, and

these are issues that should be discussed in a Presidential election.

But they have to be vetted in a forum such as a commission, where all

of the answers are put out. And if there are mistakes that have been

made, both during the Clinton administration and in this

administration, the American people will be better off, and, more

importantly, America's role in the world will once again be respected.

One only has to look at the polls. There was a recent study done, and

I am not going to take the time, but let me just give you a quick

example, and then one of you gentleman can close.

This is rating George Bush, but substitute George Bush for America.

In Britain, our closest ally, the favorability of George Bush is 39

percent; the unfavorably is 57 percent. In France, the favorability is

15; 85 unfavorable. Fourteen percent favorable in Germany; 85

unfavorable. In Russia, 28 favorable; 60 unfavorable. In Turkey, 21

percent favorable; 67 percent unfavorable. Pakistan, 7 percent

favorable; 67 percent unfavorable. In Jordan, 3 percent favorable; and

96 percent unfavorable.

This is true all over the world, not just in the Mideast, but Asia,

all over Latin America. It is about the United States. We need allies.

We are finding that out. We need cooperation. We have got to win the

war on terror. We cannot tolerate appeasement, but we should not be

doing it alone.

Madam Speaker, I am reminded of the words of Brent

Scowcroft and others in the first Bush administration, those that

served under President George Herbert Walker Bush, but particularly

what Brent Scowcroft stated in a column that he wrote. He expressed a

fear that a unilateral rush into a preemptive war would undercut

worldwide support for the war on terror and cast America as an

aggressor Nation for the first time in our history. Now, here is a

gentleman, a lifelong Republican, presumably, a man well respected

internationally, has an excellent reputation here in Washington as a

serious person, a man of unimpeachable integrity. And I think we have

all been saying in our own different ways what he said so eloquently.

And sadly, we find ourselves in that very, very tragic moment where we

are losing allies, we are losing the respect of the international

community; friends are beginning to turn their backs on us. And, if

that occurs, the war that we must win, the war on terror, is very much

at risk.