Mr. Speaker, last year, I led the opposition to a pre-

emptive war in Iraq--which, according to testimony given this week by

former top U.S. Weapons Inspector David Kay, wasn't even pre-emptive.

If Saddam Hussein had no weapons of mass destruction program, what

potential harm were we pre-empting?

President Bush has led our country further and further away from the

fold of the international community, ignoring the United Nations

Security council's findings, and virtually demolishing the

international support we had received following September 11th. He has

challenged Americans to a ``you're either with us or against us''

agenda, which leads to the most dangerous kind of patriotism--where

questioning and dissent are considered un-American. Well I, as an

American and a patriot, am now standing again to ask questions about

the cost of this war.

We spent $396 billion in military spending alone for 2003. As big as

this number is, it does not even include the cost of the Iraq war,

which was funded through two additional supplemental requests; the

first for $79 billion, the second was another $87 billion. Together,

that amounts an amazing $562 billion. For 2003, that amounts to almost

$11 billion dollars spent ever week, and more than $1.5 billion spent

every day. Compare that to this year's Department of Education budget

of $54 billion, which works out to less than 150 million dollars per

day, which averages out to less than $3 million per day in education

spending in each state. $1.5 billion on the military, $3 million on

education: so where are our priorities?

Here at home, 9 million Americans are unemployed, 35 million live

under the official poverty line, 44 million have no health insurance,

and millions more are unable to make ends meet. States face their worst

fiscal crisis since the Great Depression, and the yearly federal budget

deficit is passing $500 billion and growing rapidly. My own state, New

Jersey, is facing a projected $5 billion budget deficit for 2004.

And this administration doesn't intend to change course anytime soon.

According to the 2005 budget released this week, they are planning to

spend $2.2 trillion on the military over the next 5 years.

For 2004 alone, they plan to spend $399 billion on the military

(which does not include any possible future supplemental funding

requests for Iraq or Afghanistan) which is more than the combined

spending that year for education, Health, Justice, Housing Assistance,

International Affairs, Veterans Benefits, Natural Resources &

Environment, Science & Space, Transportation, employment, Employment

Training, Social Services, Income Security, Economic Development,

Social Security, Medicare, Agriculture, and Energy.

Where we spend our money is a telling sign of where our priorities

lie. We have abandoned our children, our teachers, our laborers, our

homeless, our veterans, and our seniors in order to fund these regime-

changing, unilateral military actions. We are under funding No Child

Left Behind, IDEA, after-school programs, and family literacy programs.

We have not extended unemployment benefits for those without jobs. We

have offered our seniors a Medicare program that does almost nothing to

cut their prescription drug costs, and we're threatening to destabilize

their Social Security through privatization.

I am very concerned about the direction in which our country is

headed. We're sliding further and further down a slippery slope where

our county's basic needs are not being met. That is why this year's

presidential election is so key. We need a leader that can mend the

relationships broken by this unnecessary war and its ill-administered

aftermath. We need to bring home the tens of thousands men and women

whose lives have been placed on the line for no good reason. We must

see change for the better.

More numbers:

For the cost of every cluster bomb, we can enroll 2 children in Head

Start.

For the cost of every minute of the war on Iraq, we could have paid

the annual salary and benefits for 15 registered nurses. For every hour

of the war on Iraq, we could improve, repair, and modernize 20 schools.

For the cost of one day's war on Iraq, we could have prevented all of

the budget cuts to education programs in 2003. For the amount of money

we spend ever week in Iraq, we could build 142,857 units of affordable

housing. For the amount of money we spend to buy one stealth bomber, we

could pay the annual salary plus benefits for 38,000 teachers. We might

be able to give a few of them a raise--image that!

Each day the Pentagon spends $1.7 billion, which is enough to build

200 new elementary schools, house 136,000 homeless, or provide Pell

grants to one million college students (per day!).

With less than the cost of ONE of the Iraq supplementals, we could do

all these things: Provide basic health and food to the world's poor:

$12 billion. Rebuild America's public schools over 10 years: $12

billion. Reduce class size for grades 1-3 to 15 students per class: $11

billion. Reduce debts of impoverished nations: $10 billion; Provide

health insurance to all uninsured American kids: $6 billion; Increased

federal funding for clean energy and energy efficiency: $6 billion;

Public financing of all federal elections: $1 billion; Fully fund Head

Start: $2 billion.

Other countries military spending: Russia--$65 billion; China--$47

billion; Japan--$42.6 billion; U.K.--$38.4 billion.

These combined are a total of $193 billion, which is less than half

our FY '03 or FY '04 military spending--not including the cost of Iraq

and Afghanistan.

Please don't confuse military spending with the safety and security

of our Nation. It is a common misconception that higher military

enhances homeland security. However, many of these responsibilities

fall onto our struggling, under funded State and local government

agencies, whom we know as ``first responders,'' and to agencies outside

of the Defense Department, such as the FBI, FEMA, and the Coast Guard.

This massive military spending budget addresses none of these programs.

Another matter of concern to me is not only how much money we're

spending on our military, but how that money is being spent. The

President's $87 billion supplemental contained an astronomical waste of

taxpayer dollars. These are just some of the administration's requests:

$100 million for several new housing communities, complete with

roads, schools, and a medical clinic; $20 million for business classes,

at a cost of $10,000 per Iraqi student; $900 million for imported

kerosene and diesel, even though Iraq has huge oil reserves; $54

million to study the Iraqi postal system; $10 million for prison-

building consultants; $2 million for garbage trucks; $200,000 each for

Iraqis in a witness protection program; $100 million for hundreds of

criminal investigators; and $400 million for two prisons, at a cost of

nearly $50,000 per bed.