Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that Harriet Miers

has withdrawn her nomination to the United States Supreme Court. The

stated reason had to do with executive privilege for legal advice she

had given to the President that she did not want to reveal, but I do

not think you need to be an expert tea leaf reader to see that public

support for Ms. Miers' appointment, particularly among conservatives,

was scarce, actually absent. As a result, Ms. Miers decided to step

aside.

Perhaps there is a lesson here that we can apply to another

initiative, an initiative of the White House that is rapidly losing

public confidence. Two-and-a-half years into the Iraq War, it could not

be clearer that the President's policy is one with tragic consequences.

It is time for the President to admit his mistake and change his

course. Over 2,000 of our brave soldiers are dead. That is 2,000 too

many.

The threat of terrorism has not diminished at all. We have lost

respect and credibility with allies around the world. The insurgency

remains as strong as ever and is further animated with every day that

the American occupation continues.

We are pouring about $1 billion a week into this fiasco, and, by the

way, the original rationale for fighting this war, weapons of mass

destruction, turns out to be based on fabrications and deceptions.

What is the President waiting for? How much worse does it need to

get? How many more casualties must we endure?

Look, you do not have to take my word for it. The White House would

like you to believe that opposition to the war exists on the fringes

only, but the fact is that 66 percent of our people, two out of every

three Americans, has a negative opinion of the way the President has

handled Iraq. Apparently included in that two out of every three are

former members of the administration and Bush family loyalists.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, who served as Colin Powell's Chief of

Staff at the State Department, recently went public with his

misgivings. He talks about a dysfunctional national security

policymaking process, with decisions made secretively by a Cheney-

Rumsfeld cabal that was given free rein by a President who, as

Wilkerson put it, ``is not versed in international relations and not

too much interested in them either.''

The latest issue of The New Yorker magazine features a profile of

Brent Scowcroft, a close friend and adviser to the President's father

and mentor to Condoleezza Rice. Scowcroft was considered the hawk of

the first President Bush's national security team, but in this article

he is frank about his disillusionment with the current Iraq policy. He

notes that you cannot impose democracy by force, that the Iraq War is

breeding terrorism, and that Saddam did not represent a threat to the

United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to bring the troops home, and I feel even

more strongly on this point after traveling to Iraq a few weeks ago.

There is no shortage of ideas for possible exit strategies. For

example, there are at least four good proposals right here on the floor

of the House of Representatives, and on the other side of the Capitol,

Senator Kerry and Senator Feingold have offered specific plans.

I held a hearing just last month where a broad range of experts

discussed ways we could end the occupation while keeping Iraq secure

and helping its people rebuild their country.

There is an important conversation going on about these issues. It

would be nice if the President joined in, but to immediately insist

that we stay the course is at this point irresponsible, insulting and

demeaning to the American people.

I know this President does not like to admit his mistakes, but maybe

it is time to eat a little crow. I think a little bruised pride is a

small price to pay if it means more Americans will not have to die.

Mr. Speaker, let us return Iraq to the Iraqi people and our soldiers

home to their families.