Mr. Speaker, minutes ago the House approved the fiscal

year 2006 Homeland Security appropriation bill to the tune of,

underwhelmingly, $37 billion. In a vacuum, $37 billion sounds like a

lot of money, and it is, but when you consider that Congress has

appropriated over $100 billion on the security of Iraq this year alone,

and more than $200 billion overall, $37 billion sounds much less

significant. In fact, the $37 billion spending bill that was approved

today represents less than 5 percent of the U.S. annual discretionary

budget. Yet the Iraq war this year, this year alone, represents well

over 10 percent of our annual discretionary budget.

Clearly, something is wrong with this picture. Spending on homeland

security, while inadequate in its amount, focuses on the right things

to protect America: First responders, border and port security, and

cargo inspections. On the other hand, funding for the war in Iraq

continues to focus on poorly planned military operations and

irresponsible no-bid contracts to war profiteers like Halliburton and

its subsidiary Kellogg, Brown & Root.

At the same time, the Iraq supplemental spending bill of over $200

billion has neglected to provide adequate funds for body armor for the

troops. This is a particularly egregious mistake in light of the 2004

study indicating as many as a quarter of all troop deaths could have

been prevented if the most advanced body armor had been provided to

every single soldier in Iraq.

It is important to note the irony in our funding priorities. The

Homeland Security budget, which is vitally important towards ensuring

the safety of the American people, is drastically underfunded. On the

other hand, the Iraq war, which was a war of choice, not a war of

necessity, is so overfunded that last year $9 billion in reconstruction

funds went missing. Nine billion dollars. That is more than a quarter

of this year's homeland security budget.

And let us not forget another more recent report by the Special

Inspector General for Iraq's reconstruction. This report states that

another $100 million for reconstruction projects in southern Iraq is

also missing and cannot be accounted for.

Mr. Speaker, we need to focus our spending on programs and policies

that will help ensure the safety of the American people. The war in

Iraq will not make Americans safer, because this conflict is causing

the United States to be perceived by the Muslim world as a colonial

occupier, not as a liberating force. This perception, combined with our

continued military presence in Iraq, has assisted radical Muslim

terrorist groups like al Qaeda in their recruiting efforts. The result

is that 3\1/2\ years after September 11 Americans are less safe.

Fortunately, there is a way to achieve sensible spending while also

keeping America secure. Over the last 2 years, I have developed the

SMART Security Strategy for the 21st Century. SMART is a sensible

multilateral American response to terrorism. SMART Security urges a

shifting of America's budget priorities to more effectively meet our

national security needs. That means spending more money on port

security, cargo inspections and airline security, and less money on

warfare, outdated weapon systems, and new nuclear weapons.

Instead of funding continued military operations in Iraq, the SMART

platform would encourage other nations to work with the United States

and spend more money on peacekeeping, on reconstruction and

developmental aid to ensure long-term peace and stability in the Middle

East.

In fact, it has been proven when debt relief increases, terrorism and

the conditions that give rise to terrorism tend to decrease. That is

why the SMART platform encourages wealthy nations to provide debt

relief and developmental aid for the world's poorest countries. After

more than 2 years of fighting, it is clear that the war in Iraq cannot

be won through military means. We need to be smarter. We need to be

smarter than the terrorists, not just bigger and stronger.

The fight to secure our country must be fought on more than the

battlefield. We must be smart in the way we prioritize our national

spending by focusing on true security needs instead of superficial

security needs. Homeland security is a true security need. Let us

remember the next time President Bush asks for money for Iraq, which I

understand will be sometime this summer, we need to know which is

secure and which is not.