Madam Speaker, this week Congress is debating the

President's request for more than 81 billion additional dollars to

finance his misadventure in Iraq.

I will oppose this bill because I support the troops and have deep

admiration for their courage. I will vote against the supplemental

because I believe our brave soldiers are being used as pawns by their

civilian superiors, whose wastefulness and incompetence is betraying

their duty to keep us safe.

This supplemental will bring the overall Iraq price tag to more than

$200 billion. What are the American people getting for their $200

billion? What kind of return on their investment?

We have created a hotbed of terrorism in Iraq. We have earned the

wrath of the entire Muslim world. Meanwhile, we have a Swiss cheese

homeland security system, and we have lost 1,500 of our troops, not to

mention the more than 11,000 wounded and the many who will suffer

mental trauma for the rest of their lives.

The Center For American Progress did a study of what $200 billion

could really buy in terms of our security here in the United States of

America.

Five billion dollars would give our ports and waterways the

protection they need from attacks.

It would cost only $1 billion to screen all air passenger cargo.

Just $2.6 billion would allow our rail and public transit systems to

meet important security requirements.

Just think of what we could do at home for $200 billion: universal

preschool education, comprehensive health coverage for every American,

a safe child care system that will give peace of mind to all working

families.

There would still be plenty left over to implement a SMART security

agenda that would be about preventing war, not preemptive war; that

would eliminate wasteful programs like missile defense and the many

Cold War relics that are doing nothing to keep us safe.

SMART security would mean robust multilateral alliances to stop the

spread of terrorism, vigorous inspection regimes to stop weapons of

mass destruction proliferation, and an ambitious humanitarian

development program that tackles the poverty and despair that foster

terrorism in the first place.

$200 billion, that is about $675 for every American man, woman and

child, which is not to say that the sacrifices of this war have been

spread evenly throughout the population.

The well-connected and the wealthy have not been asked to sacrifice,

even though rolling back the Bush tax cuts would go a long way toward

paying this enormous bill.

No, the ones who have sacrificed are coming home in flag-draped

coffins because they were sent to depose a regime that represented no

imminent threat to our security. Their families did not get a tax cut.

The only thing they got from the government was a devastating letter

that Donald Rumsfeld did not even bother to sign personally.

The most disturbing thing about the President's request for more Iraq

funding is the lack of accountability. Why are we writing another check

for a mission that has been so badly botched? Who is being held

responsible for the misuse of the money we have already approved?

If Secretary Rumsfeld and the Pentagon could not manage to get body

armor to our troops with the first $100 billion we gave them, why would

we trust them with even more hard-earned American tax dollars?

Where is this money going? How much of it is enriching war

profiteers? Why did the Army waive its usual procedures and make full

payment to Halliburton, despite legitimate questions about overbilling

and financial mismanagement?

Why can we not get a congressional investigation into the $9 billion

that mysteriously disappeared from the books at the Coalition

Provisional Authority?

If the President wants more money for this war, he can take it out of

something he cares about instead of taking it out of the hides of the

American people.

No more blank checks. I will vote against this supplemental, and I

urge my colleagues to do the same.