Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my

concern over our Nation's involvement in the war in Iraq. I would have

hoped that the recent Iraq elections would quell my concern, but the

fact is that I had grave concerns before we engaged in this war, I have

had grave concerns during the unfolding of this war and today I still

have serious concerns over this administration's ability to provide a

positive outcome in Iraq. This President must be held accountable to

this Congress and more importantly to the people of the United States.

He must provide a success strategy and a vision for what comes next in

Iraq and how and when our brave troops will be able to come home. We

owe this public statement to the more than 1,400 troops that have died

and those tragically that may lose their lives in the future.

The President indicated during his State of the Union that one of our

responsibilities to future generations is to ``leave them an America

that is safe from danger, and protected peace.'' However, absent an

articulated success for exit plan by our troops, the very existence of

that future generation is in jeopardy. This war has certainly created

more terrorists than it has eliminated. In addition, our troops are now

returning home in worse condition than before they left. Too many of

our men and women have suffered life changing injuries in Iraq and now

must come home to live the rest of their lives. Troops are being asked

to stay in Iraq longer than they had ever committed for and all of this

takes a toll on their families. In the end this war will not be the

legacy of this administration or of this Congress, but instead will be

the legacy of our young troops who will have to face the rest of their

lives based on the consequences of this war. Their bloodshed demands a

reasonable success and exit plan.

My distinguished colleague, Ms. Woolsey, has introduced legislation

that calls on the President to develop and implement a plan to bring

our troops home and provide the Iraqis the opportunity to control their

own stable nation. The administration will surely respond that they are

committed to a free Iraq and the

truth is that we all are committed to that ideal, but this

administration seems incapable of providing clarity on its plans in

this war.

From the very beginning we have been left in the dark as to what this

administration was planning in regards to Iraq. Our troops and their

families have been the ones to suffer and the fact is that the Iraqis

have yet to see a free and stable nation. Yes, the recent elections

were positive outcome, but they are far far from resolving the

predicament in Iraq. I support my colleague's legislation and I urge

all Members of this body to support it. How can we possibly be against

legislation that calls upon the President to notify Congress and the

American people about the future plans for the war in Iraq.

In formulating a success and exit plan, we must take additional steps

to improve Iraq's economic and political stability. We must change our

military focus from combat operations to training the Iraqi army.

Moreover, we must intensify our reconstruction efforts with projects

that give the Iraqi people real, tangible hope for their future.

The fact remains that American troops have remained in Iraq for 2

years, and the death toll continues to rise; therefore, we must proceed

with caution. The positive momentum that has come from a successful

election must be used as an opportunity to stop the bloodshed and the

expenditure of tax dollars on this effort. I hope that the

administration will use the positive momentum of this achievement as an

opportunity to devise an success and exit plan for our troops as

outlined by Representative Woolsey's legislation.