Mr. President, nearly a week has passed since the President

vetoed a bipartisan proposal that fully funded our troops and also

changed course in Iraq so we could responsibly end the war.

Although the President's actions thwarted the will of the American

people, very clearly, they--the American people--deserve to know what

their leaders in Congress are doing. We are alerting them that we, as

congressional leaders, are doing everything we can to work toward an

agreement on an emergency supplemental funding bill that will make

America more secure, fully fund our troops, and responsibly change

course in Iraq.

Our proposal called for a change in the mission and the phased

redeployment of U.S. combat troops no later than October 1 of this

year.

A bipartisan majority of the House and Senate made it clear they

believe a timeline for the reduction of combat operations will compel

the Iraqi Government to take responsibility for their own country, will

reduce the specter of occupation, and will allow our forces to come

home.

The American people believe this overwhelmingly. But now there are

signs the Republican leadership in Congress is beginning to think a

timeline is necessary as well. According to the L.A. Times, House

Republican Leader John Boehner said:

The House Republican leader now seems to be saying that he and his

colleagues agree there must be a time limit on the President's current

course in Iraq.

What is also revealing, and somewhat disturbing, is the Republican

leader is willing to allow our troops to stay in Iraq with a failing

strategy until he and his colleagues decide it is time to part with the

President.

President Bush--the same President who vetoed our plan--said this as

a candidate about his predecessor, Bill Clinton, and the war in Bosnia,

in 1999:

We hope President Bush will keep his own past words in mind as these

negotiations continue.

We are pleased to see the House Republican leader, speaking on behalf

of his caucus, adopt our view that this commitment in Iraq must not be

open-ended, that there must be a timeline. It is surely no coincidence

that his views come at a time when conditions in Iraq grow worse.

I am reminded of the Easter sermon of Pope Benedict, delivered only a

month ago. The Pope said:

He continued:

Since those words were spoken, conditions have indeed deteriorated.

In April, our troops suffered the deadliest month of the year and one

of the deadliest of the entire 51 months of the war.

The President's own Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction

released its quarterly report last weekend that painted a dispiriting

picture of waste, ineffectiveness, and failure to achieve even

minimally satisfactory results.

Despite burning through most of the 20 billion American dollars

planned for reconstruction, many Iraqis are without basic necessities

such as electricity and clean drinking water. Of course, oil production

is down. Only a third of Iraqi children are attending school. Seventy

percent of the kids are suffering from symptoms of trauma that could

paralyze an entire generation that we are counting on to harvest the

seeds of democracy.

Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki is accused of sabotaging efforts for

peace and stability by firing some of the country's top law enforcement

officials for doing too good a job of combating violent Shiite

militias.

President Bush speaks of pressuring the Iraqi people to take

responsibility for their own future. Yet while American troops are

fighting and dying to secure the country, the Iraqi Government is

planning a 2-month summer vacation.

Yesterday, eight more courageous American soldiers fell; four the day

before. I have no doubt these developments weighed on Leader Boehner's

mind when he made his comments suggesting a fall timeline to the war in

Iraq. But I know he is not alone. Many of my Republican friends across

the aisle feel strongly that a change of course in our Iraq strategy is

needed--one that holds the administration and the Iraqis accountable

for real results. Many of my Republican friends across the aisle feel

it is time for change. This is the time. I know many of my Republican

friends also intend to be part of the solution on the way forward, and

I look forward to working with them. We all look forward to continuing

negotiations, which we will work on today. I have spoken to Chairman

Obey today. I talked to him Friday. I will continue to talk to him

every day until we reach agreement on a bill that fully funds the

troops while providing a responsible new course that makes America more

secure.

No one wants to succeed in Iraq and make America more secure than I.