Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. Waters) for her leadership in the Out of Iraq Caucus

and for her leadership in the effort to achieve peace and to achieve a

more rational U.S. foreign policy and to do the right thing on behalf

of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the war in Iraq was wrong. I believe it

was a mistake. This was a war based on fix. There were no weapons of

mass destruction. There were no ties to al Qaeda. There were no nuclear

weapons. There was no imminent threat to the United States. And with

the acquiescence of this Congress, I am sad to say this country rushed

into a war, a war that has turned out to be a violent quagmire, a war

with no end.

Mr. Speaker, we have already spent some $300 billion on this war in

Iraq. There is no end in sight. We are told that if we are there for

another 2 years that the figure will be up to $1 trillion.

Now, think about it. What could we do with hundreds of billions of

dollars? We could reduce our deficit and reduce the debt. We could

actually do something very important in helping to insure some of the

millions of Americans who do not have health insurance in this country.

We could help to rebuild our schools and provide a first-class

education to every single young person in this country. We could

rebuild our infrastructure. Or we can put it toward

helping our veterans who have fought in the wars over the years, who

have given so much of themselves, and who are sick and tired of getting

nickled and dimed by this Congress with budgets that underfund the

veterans' affairs every single year.

Mr. Speaker, I personally believe that the policy that we should

pursue is one that requires the United States to end our involvement in

Iraq. I have legislation that I have introduced that requires an end to

the war in Iraq now, not 6 months from now, not a year from now, not at

some date to be determined by the President. We have given him his

chance, and he has come back and said that he just wants to stay there

for the next decade. He does not seem to be mindful of the fact that

everything that he said about this war has turned out to be false.

I want this war ended now. I think the majority of people in this

country want this war ended now. They realize that this huge U.S.

presence in Iraq right now is not calming the violence. They realize

that we are now a major part of the problem.

There was no al Qaeda in Iraq before we got in Iraq. It is not just

al Qaeda. It is other terrorist organizations, quite frankly, that are

now sticking their nose in Iraq, trying to get at the United States. It

is not about the future of Iraq. It is about the United States of

America.

Now I believe that the time has come for the President to authorize

an orderly and safe withdrawal of our troops. The legislation that I

have introduced calls for that, right now. If it passes today, it would

begin today. The legislation says that we can support all efforts to

make sure that our troops have a safe and orderly withdrawal from Iraq.

It says that we can support reconstruction efforts in Iraq, which I

think is important. We helped destroy that country. We need to help

rebuild that country. It says that we can support international forces

as transitional security in Iraq. If other countries want to provide a

transitional security force, we should be able to support that.

Hopefully, some of the neighboring Arab countries will want to do that.

We should be able to support a U.N. force or a NATO force going in.

But the bottom line is, I think it is clear to anybody who has been

watching this, that the time has come to demand that no more U.S.

forces be in Iraq. It is time to end this war.

Mr. Speaker, now I know that there are some, and I hear it a lot,

every time those of us try to raise some questions and try to raise

some dissent, there are those who say, well, you should not do that. It

is somehow unpatriotic. You are not supporting our troops. You are not

supporting our country. You are giving comfort to the enemy. I hear

that all the time when I speak about my opinions on Iraq or when I hear

others speak in ways that dissent from this current policy. Well,

nothing could be farther from the truth.

Let me tell you, it takes absolutely no courage at all for anybody in

this House or in the United States Senate or in this administration to

wave the American flag and say, stay the course and send more troops.

It takes no courage at all. Because it is not us whose lives are on the

line and, with very few exceptions, it is not our children whose lives

are on the line. Over 2,000 Americans have lost their lives in a

conflict that the President of the United States said would be a

relatively short conflict that would be easily manageable and that

would not entail these casualties. He was wrong. Two thousand Americans

have now died, over 2,000 Americans. That is not counting the tens of

thousands of innocent Iraqis who have lost their lives.

The President and his administration was wrong on this. We were not

told the truth. I sat through all of those classified briefings with

the Secretary of State, with the Secretary of Defense, with all of the

intelligence agencies that they brought up here to tell us about what

this war would be if we got into it, and everything they said was

wrong.

Now, one of two things explains that fact. One, either our

intelligence agencies are just so incompetent and so dumb that they got

everything wrong; or, two, that this intelligence was exaggerated. Now,

I do not believe that our intelligence agencies are dumb. I do not

believe our intelligence agencies could get anything that wrong. We

spend billions of dollars each year in supporting our intelligence

agencies. I do not think, I do not believe that anybody believes that

they got it that wrong.

What I think most people believe is that the intelligence that was

presented to the Congress and to the United States people was the

intelligence that this administration thought fit their argument,

complemented their argument. It was not a balanced picture. It was what

they wanted to present; and, as a result, there was a rush to war.

Mr. Speaker, we need to figure out a way now as to how to get out of

this. It is imperative that we get out of this now. I have been to

three funerals in the last few months in my own district of young men

who have lost their lives in this conflict. I have seen their families

grieve, their friends grieve. I do not want to see any more families

have to go through that. I want this administration to come clean on

what the facts are, on what their plans on, and also come clean on the

intelligence leading into this war.

I want to say one thing about the Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid.

I will tell you, I was never more proud of him than I was yesterday

when he finally stood up and showed the commitment and showed the spine

to ask the tough questions that people all over this country,

Republican and Democrat alike, have been asking, and that is, what was

the intelligence that brought us into this war? Was it exaggerated? How

was it manipulated? How could we have gotten it so wrong?

I want to tell my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I think Democrats and

Republicans alike believe, I am not saying in this Chamber, but I am

saying throughout the country, believe that if, in fact, there are

people in this administration who intentionally and deliberately

exaggerated intelligence and manipulated intelligence to get us into

this war, then those people should be fired and fired now.

What you saw was Scooter Libby's indictment is just the tip of the

iceberg. Quite frankly, the President should fire Karl Rove now. He

lied to the President of the United States. He lied to the American

people. He told the President, along with Mr. Libby, that they had no

knowledge of who leaked Valerie Plame's identity to the press. We now

know that that is a lie. And the fact that this President sees no

problem with keeping his top aide on after this man lied about

something so serious, quite frankly, is very disturbing to this Member

of Congress.

These are serious matters. War is a big deal. This is not something

to be taken lightly. The great English conservative Edmund Burke once

said, ``A conscientious man would be cautious in how he dealt with

blood.'' This administration claims to be conservative. Well, they

should heed Edmund Burke's words. They have been too casual with how

they have dealt with blood. They have been too casual with how they

have deployed our troops overseas.

And the indifference that we see each and every day at press

briefings by White House spokespeople, by the President; you never hear

from the Vice President, so I cannot really say much about him. But

this kind of casual attitude that everything is just great. Let us just

stay the course. We are doing the right thing. It takes my breath away.

I do not know if it is that they do not watch TV or they do not read

the newspapers or they do not talk to those who are on the ground in

Iraq or those families who have lost loved ones, but the fact of the

matter is this is a serious matter.

I think the only way that we are going to see a change in course is

for Members of Congress to organize, like we are doing here in this Out

of Iraq Caucus, for people across this country to join in protest, to

join in dissent, to start writing their Members of Congress and saying,

we demand that you end this war and end it now. That is the only way we

are going to see an end to this war. Because I am convinced, watching

this administration in action, that nothing will change.

Sadly, I am convinced, by watching the leadership of this Congress

and how they have behaved during these last few years of this war, with

this indifference, with this kind of cover-up

mentality, to not question the administration, to not hold them

accountable for anything, to not do our job with proper oversight, I am

convinced that unless Members of Congress are pressured by their

constituents, then we will not act here as well.

Mr. Speaker, let me just conclude by saying that I love this country

more than anything, and nothing disturbs me more than to see us

involved in a war that we have no business being in. Nothing disturbs

me more than to see the loss of innocent lives that we see going on

each and every day.

I think we are better. I think we can do better. You know, great

nations sometimes misstep. Sometimes great nations make mistakes. It is

up to great nations to fix those mistakes. We have made a mistake in

Iraq. This is not about whether we honor our troops or not. I honor our

troops. I want to do more for our troops.

I wish the people on the other side of the aisle would join us in

demanding more money for our veterans. I am worried about all of those

men and women coming back from Iraq with post-traumatic stress

syndrome. I am worried that they are not going to get the health care

they deserve.

I am worried that their families are not getting the benefits that

they need and that they deserve. I am worried about people coming back

to no jobs. So this is not about our commitment to our troops. We are

committed to our troops. We honor them. We are in awe of their service.

They have done what their country has asked.

This is about whether this policy is right or whether this policy is

wrong. And if you believe, as many of us do, that this policy is wrong,

then you need to stand up and you need to be counted, and you need to

demand that this policy change and change now.

It is not patriotic to remain silent in the face of policies that you

object to. That is not patriotism. That is cowardice. And we need to

stand up, those of us who believe that this war is wrong, and I know

that there are many who are silent right now who believe as we do that

this war was wrong. They need to stand up and join with us.

Enough is enough. The gentlewoman from California (Ms. Waters) put it

eloquently and succinctly. Enough is enough. This war needs to come to

an end. Not one more dollar, not one more death. This is the time to do

it.

We are trying, with this caucus, to energize people on both sides of

the aisle, this is not a partisan issue, to come together and demand

that we change our policy. Our country is so much better. We are so

much better than this. We stand for so much more than what is on

display in Iraq.

And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the White House listens to those of us

in the United States Congress. Our numbers are growing each and every

day who disagree with this war. And I hope they are watching these

public opinion polls and listening to people all across this land who

are saying they do not want any more war, they do not want any more

people to die.

They are tired of being engaged in a war that is dragging our good

name into the mud. This is not America. We are so much better.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to listen to what we are saying

tonight, to join with us and hopefully help put this country on a

better course. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. Waters).