I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for yielding.

This may be a breakthrough tonight. We have, through the 15 months that

we have been handling the Iraq Watch duties on the floor, talked about

how we would love to be joined by our Republican colleagues in a good-

faith discussion about what is happening in Iraq, to discuss the pros

and the cons and to question one another, talk to one another about

what is working and what is not working. I do not want to put anybody

on the spot, but I would be delighted to have a discussion right now. I

am sure the gentleman from Massachusetts would yield and I would yield

time to anybody who wanted to ask a question or challenge what we might

have said.

This is not a challenge. It is an invitation.

In any event, I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for talking

about the whole question of whether or not the connection exists

between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, a connection that the Vice

President has repeatedly invoked. At one point the President himself

tried to straighten out the Vice President and said, wait a minute,

there is no evidence that Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11. Yet the Vice

President has continued to make this accusation, even in the face of

the 9/11 Commission staff report that suggests that there was no

working relationship, no collaborative relationship between Saddam

Hussein and al Qaeda.

There is no doubt that the inability of the coalition to secure Iraq

is a tremendous impediment to everything that we are trying to achieve.

I certainly share the goals of President Bush in establishing a

peaceful and stable Iraq with a representative government, hopefully a

flourishing democracy; but that fine goal and all the yardsticks

leading up to it cannot be achieved without security. We are going to

have no success with reconstruction, we will not have a legitimate

turnover of sovereignty on June 30 without security. We cannot have

elections without security.

I wanted to do something I have not done before during Iraq Watch,

which we started in, I think it was, April 2003. I wanted to read a few

words that were spoken at a rally in Los Angeles on June 5 by a young

man named Dante Zappala. Dante's brother, Sergeant Sherwood Baker, a

member of the Pennsylvania National Guard, was killed in Iraq on April

26, 2004. I have met with Sherwood's parents, Celeste and Al Zappala.

They gave me a copy of their other son's comments regarding Sherwood

Baker's death. These are the words of Dante Zappala. I will have them

entered into the Record. They are way too long to read tonight. I

wanted to read the first paragraph and part of the last paragraph of

these remarks. On June 5, Dante Zappala said of his brother Sherwood

Baker:

``The tragedy that touches so many people in so many corners of the

world, the tragedy of war, the tragedy of violence and sudden death,

touched me on April 26 when my brother, Sergeant Sherwood Baker, was

killed in an explosion in Baghdad. I speak today with my voice and with

the voice of the countless others who have suffered personal loss as a

result of this war, those many people with no microphone in front of

them, those many people with no one to listen to their pain. As big

brothers do, Sherwood protected me, he carried me, and he taught me.''

Dante went on to express his frustrations with our policy in Iraq and

then he ended his statement with the following:

``We do not benefit from the deaths of our soldiers, nor do we

benefit from the deaths of the Iraqi people. To honor Sherwood, I have

vowed to follow his path, to lift my head and go to work. Our duty is

to spread truth. Our duty is to combat the lies, the

misrepresentations, the fear, the mongering and the people who mean to

ruin our belief in this country. I have made a promise to my brother

and that is to do as he would do, to not be angry about my

circumstances, to not let bitterness overcome my heart, but to proceed

with hope.

``Today and in the days ahead, do not let your anger carry you. Allow

your desire to make change carry you. Allow the compassion towards

humanity to carry you. Ride your commitment to peace. Share your soul

with your country. Share your values with the world. Make it your

job.''

Mr. Speaker, I find these words remarkable. A family devastated by

the loss of a son and brother, and yet this brother, speaking in Los

Angeles, calling upon the better sides of our nature, calling upon all

of us to put anger and frustration aside and to talk about compassion

toward humanity.

The pain that so many American families have suffered as a result of

this war is immense. The sacrifices that the armed services have made,

the men and women, the loss of life has been tragic. I am sure it is

true to say that they were proud to serve and in virtually all cases

proud to honor their country, were there because they wanted to be

there, and made a magnificent sacrifice to try to bring peace and

stability to Iraq. What angers me, and I try to be inspired by Danta

Zappala and not resort to anger, but what angers me, though, is the

continuous reputations, he referenced them in his statement, the

continued attempts to connect the Saddam Hussein regime with 9-11, a

connection that is bogus, a connection that the gentleman just said was

not made by the CIA, denied by the FBI, and yet the Vice President

continues to want to use that nonexistent connection as a justification

for taking us to war with half truths and with deceptions.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I wanted to thank our friend from Indiana for jumping into this

discussion. We have been looking for some bipartisan debate back and

forth; and the gentleman, if nothing else, has the courage of his

convictions; and we welcome him here tonight.

I wanted to respond to a couple things the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. Burton) said. I think he said that

we were suggesting George Bush has been asleep at the switch in Iraq.

That is not at all what we have been suggesting here. President Bush

has been anything but asleep at the switch. He has been very aggressive

regarding Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, back to the

gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Burton), I just wanted to respond finally

to the gentleman's suggestion that the prior administration, the

Clinton administration, had not done enough after several acts of

terror against this country.

The act of terror on 9/11 did change the thinking of a lot of people.

But if you will recall, in August of 1998, President Clinton did order

cruise missile strikes in Sudan as a result of some of the acts of

terror; and the Republican opponents in the Congress of the President

at that time did not accuse him of doing too little; they accused him

of doing too much. There was a great partisan uproar that President

Clinton was trying to distract the public from his impeachment woes

with the use of American military power.

I would say to the gentleman that the fact is the

Republican opposition at that time was in full throat, and the

criticism was not that he should be doing more; but that he was doing

too much, in the view of his critics.

I raise the point in good faith. I was not in the Congress then, and

the gentleman may or may not have been involved at that point at that

time. It shows you when there is too much partisanship I think that it

clouds the judgment. It probably affected President Clinton. He

probably did not think he could have congressional support if he took

more action at that time. I do not know.

I would suggest that there is a time when the level of partisanship

can rise so high that it can cloud the judgment of the government to

act in a concerted way. I do not want to see that happen.

There is a lot of frustration about Iraq and a lot of opposition to

what many of us think are the deceptions and the half-truths that have

been used. The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Delahunt) came today

to try to talk about that, and I welcome the bipartisan discussion

tonight; but we have got to try to get past the bipartisan anger.