Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the gentlelady from

Ohio, who is the Chair of our House Ethics Committee, for yielding and

for her tremendous leadership on so many issues, and for her

consistent, and I mean consistent, opposition to this war from day one.

Also I would like to thank the Chair of our Congressional Black

Caucus, Congresswoman Carolyn Kilpatrick, for your outstanding

leadership and also for your commitment in changing the President's

failed policy on Iraq and for making sure that the Congressional Black

Caucus speaks in one voice. Thank you, Congresswoman Kilpatrick.

Let me also salute all of our colleagues from the Congressional Black

Caucus who have opposed this war from the start, including

Congresswoman Maxine Waters who actually boldly started the Out of Iraq

Caucus. If our voices had been listened to, we would not have embarked

upon this unnecessary, immoral war. I once again stand here as the

daughter of a 25-year veteran who fought in two wars. It is past time

to end this war.

Mr. Speaker, last week the President once again took to the air waves

to make his case for the same old ``stay the course'' strategy. He said

that he will return the number of troops in Iraq to pre-surge levels by

July of 2008. He wants us to believe that by getting back to where we

were last January sometime next summer, he wants us to think that that

is progress. The American people aren't buying that. They know how to

count. It is the same song and dance from the people who told us that

there were weapons of mass destruction, who assured us that we would be

greeted as liberators, who declared ``mission accomplished,'' and said

really it is mission impossible but he declared mission accomplished

and who said we were turning the corner and that the insurgency was in

its last throes.

The fact is that the Bush ``stay the course'' strategy put us on the

path for 10 years of occupation in Iraq at the minimum. It is time to

call this what it is. It is really the President's plan to run out the

clock on his failed policy, to move the goal post once again so that he

could sneak out the back door and leave the American people holding the

bag after he leaves the White House.

Well, let me ask you, how many of our troops should die so the

President can save face? How many Iraqis must die to convince the

President that the occupation is bringing disaster to hundreds of

thousands of Iraqis? How much of our tax dollars should we spend so the

President can avoid admitting that his policy failed? We are now

spending $12 billion a month in Iraq. For the price of 1 month in Iraq,

we could be paying for 1.5 million children to go to Head Start for a

year. For the price of 1 month in Iraq, we could have hired 200,000 new

school teachers for a year. For the price of 1 month in Iraq, we could

have insured 7 million of the 8.7 million children living in this

country without medical insurance for a year. Mr. Speaker, that is just

the cost of 30 days in Iraq, and the President thinks we should be

staying yet another 10 years. That is far too high a price to pay for

him to save face.

All the talk about military progress in Iraq is a distraction. It is

a smoke screen that only serves to obscure the basic fundamental fact

that there is no military solution to the situation in Iraq. Our brave

troops are trapped in a

civil war and an occupation. Our continued presence there is not only

challenging our military; it is undermining our national security and

our efforts to fight international terrorism. That is why every member

of the Congressional Black Caucus really cosponsored a resolution which

we sponsored banning military bases and control, at least U.S. control,

of the Iraqi oil.

This resolution passed this body on a very large bipartisan vote,

and, in fact, it sent a strong message that we do not intend to occupy

Iraq, at least this House doesn't intend to have that as our policy.

Despite this administration's, though, efforts to frame this as an

issue of victory and defeat, the fact remains that redeployment of

United States troops from Iraq is really a precondition; it's a

precondition to restoring our national security and our efforts to

fight terrorism and putting us on a path toward a foreign policy that

provides real solutions for global peace and security. Redeployment is

a precondition, a precondition for engaging Iraq's neighbors and the

international community in a regional stability plan.

We have a moral obligation to help build Iraq. We bombed the country

and we, for the most part, destroyed it. But neither Iraq's neighbors

nor the international community will truly engage in a regional

stability plan as long as they believe that the United States intends

to maintain an indefinite occupation. Redeployment is a precondition

for any successful effort to combat global terrorism.

The United States' occupation of Iraq has become a rallying point for

terrorist recruitment, training and fund-raising, a factor that

actively undermines our antiterrorism efforts.

Congress has the power to end the Bush administration's failed policy

in Iraq. But it means, it really means that Members of Congress are

going to have to make a choice. Are we going to stand with the

President for an open-ended occupation that sacrifices our troops'

lives so he can save face, or are we going to act to bring this

disastrous policy to a conclusion? The choice is simple.

Congress should not provide another dime, not another dime for the

President's failed policy. We should provide the money necessary to

fully fund the safe, timely and responsible redeployment of troops and

contractors from Iraq. And let me tell you, the American people support

this.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me remind you that members of the

Congressional Black Caucus saw this disaster coming and tried to stop

it. If you recall, we had an amendment when the authorization to use

force came before this body, it was my amendment, that would have

allowed the United Nations inspectors to complete their inspection

process for weapons of mass destruction. Congress then, however, voted

to go to war. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus voted for that

resolution. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus continue to

oppose the occupation and work day and night to bring our young men and

women home. And we will continue to be that voice that reminds our

country that we truly, we really, we honestly, we do support and love

our troops, and the best way that we can demonstrate that, the only way

that we can demonstrate that, is by bringing them home and making sure

that they have their economic security, their health care, and their

mental health care and the resources they need to take their lives

back.

Thank you, Congresswoman Kilpatrick, for your leadership and for

calling us together tonight. Thank you, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs

Jones, for pulling us together and making sure we all stay on time and

for your leadership on so many issues.