Thank you very much. It is indeed a pleasure to

be on the floor with you, gentlelady and good friend from Ohio. You are

doing a wonderful job in leading this hour.

To the Congressional Black Caucus and the leadership of the

Congressional Black Caucus, America must take its collective hats off

to the Congressional Black Caucus for from the very beginning it has

been the Congressional Black Caucus that has provided the leadership in

speaking out on this war in Iraq and in speaking out from a standpoint

of what is wrong with it. And I am proud to be on the floor with you

this evening.

I thought that I might come at this from the perspective of where I

sit in the Congress. I was not here when the actual vote took place 6

years ago to commit our forces to Iraq. I was a part 5 years ago coming

into Congress with that first class that came in after 9/11, and it was

an extraordinary time. But I think it's very good for us, as we look at

this situation in Iraq, to be able to reflect from it. My father always

would tell me, Son, the best way for you to get out of a problem is to

remember how you got into it in the first place. And it might be good

for us to do that.

I happen to serve on the Foreign Affairs Committee. I am the vice

chairman of our Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism,

Nonproliferation, and International Trade. I also am a member of the

NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and I am the co-chairman of our Democratic

group on National Security. I mentioned those positions that I work

with here in the Congress so that you can understand the perspective

from which I come to this very important issue of Iraq. And let me just

state at the very beginning, as I said, it's good to know how you got

into a situation.

There is one profound fact that happened on 9/11. On the very day of

9/11 after a conference in the White House between our Vice President

Cheney, Defense Secretary Rumsfield, and Deputy Defense Secretary

Wolfowitz, collectively they said these words: Iraq must pay for this.

That's very profound. On the day of the 9/11 attack, the basic

architects of this policy said, without one iota of evidence, without

one iota of anything, Iraq must pay for this. Not even knowing it was

al Qaeda, but automatically.

Now, I mention that simply because, as I said, we have got to know

how we got into a situation to know how we get out of it. That's very

profound. The reason I mention that is that from the very beginning

there has been a line of direct effort by some, the major architects of

this most misguided foreign policy, to equate Iraq with the war on

terror. A colossal mistake and the history books will reflect that. We

then prepared to go in and attack a country that did not attack us.

I am on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and last week I sat with great

admiration and I truly believe I have great admiration for General

David Petraeus. He's a general, he's a soldier's soldier, and he is

doing and has done a remarkable job, as have all of our military. But

as I sat there and I watched him, this general, my mind went back to

another general at the beginning of this by the name of Colin Powell.

Here was the same situation. After 9/11 we sat there and a general was

put in front of us to sell us on going to war with Iraq, with

information and intelligence that many in the administration knew was

not true. The books that are pouring out now by the bushel tell us that

everybody, from the CIA to the Defense Department to so many who were

saying this, in other words, that the intelligence books were cooked.

Not a single person from Iraq came over to us and asked us, Come over

to our country and turn us into a democracy.

No, this was a war of choice based upon lies and deceit, and that is

why this will go down in history as the biggest foreign policy blunder

in the history of these United States. Make no mistake about it.

So the question has to be now, why? Here we are in Iraq on lies and

misinformation that are out now by the book loads; so we can't deny it.

And the American people know it. And they are expecting this Congress

of the United States to stand up to this White House and say, ``No

more.''

Let me tell you something, folks; I've been over there to Iraq, three

times I've been over there. I have met with our soldiers, I have eaten

with them. But the most important part of my trips over there was not

to Camp Victory or to the Green Zone or to Baghdad. Even my meetings

with General Casey, General Abizaid, all of them, which I cherish and I

have pictures and all of that, and even the meeting I had with one

soldier from Georgia who came up to me and hugged me with tears

streaming down his eyes, tears streaming down my eyes, and he said to

me, Congressman Scott, when I'm hugging you, it's like I'm hugging a

piece of home. I can't tell you how I felt.

But ladies and gentlemen, let me just tell you the most significant

parts of these trips was on the way back. Each stop that I went over to

go to Ramstein Air Base, Landstuhl, that's the hospital, that's the

medical center. That's where they come, the injured come when they are

injured in down country, as they call it, in Afghanistan and Iraq.

That's where they are. You want to know about this war, you want to

know why this war needs to be ended, that's the story, to look into

these 18- and 19- and 20- and 21-year-old kids' eyes, half their heads

blown off, arms missing, blind, and they ask the question, why? Why?

Why are we here?

I'm telling you, somebody's going to have to answer that question. On

the bleached bones of many past great civilizations and nations are

written those pathetic words, ``Too late.'' They moved too late to

correct a great wrong. I beg and I hope that this Congress has the

resolve in it to not move too late now. The whole world is depending on

us.

One of the things that President Bush did, and we've got to

understand it, what he did in sending General Petraeus up is the same

he did in sending Colin Powell up. And history is going to write it,

not David Scott, not Mrs. Tubbs Jones, not this Congress, history is

going to write that this President will go down in history as being a

President that highly used and

misused our military. That is one of the greatest shames coming out of

this Iraq situation.

And now, here we are in Iraq. I don't think the American people know

that over one-half of our entire combat capacity is involved in Iraq.

If I'm China, if I'm Russia, if I'm Iran, which they are, they're

sitting back fat and happy, anxious to see us continue to run our

military in the ground in this fruitless effort in Iraq. Soldiers, many

of them on their third and fourth tours of duty. Fifteen months they've

extended it to, not even giving an equal amount of time for rest

because they know that the military is at the breaking point. No way we

can continue this war. It will run our military into the ground.

And now let me just say one word about the President's move here.

What this is is the President is saying to us, I'm not going to end

this. It's not going to be on my watch. Even out of his own mouth he

says we will hand this enduring relationship in Iraq over, as he says

it, to my successor. That's what he said, to his successor.

So the American people have nixed that. The President is out of the

picture, but we here in Congress are in the picture. It's up to us to

not move too late. We must correct the direction we're headed, and the

first order of business is to end this war in Iraq.