Mr. Speaker, once again it is an honor to come

before the U.S. House of Representatives to be able to share a few

things with the American people.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we reflect on this period

as we stand as a country. A lot has happened today and a lot will

happen in the future, and I think it is important that we reflect on

what happened today and the direction our country needs to go in and

should go in.

We all know that there are 40 days and some hours, just about to be

39 days before the national election on November 2. I think it is also

important for us to reflect on the responsibility that every American

has to participate in that process. I would like to share with the

American people that for a couple of weeks, we have not had an

opportunity to have a 30-something hour, but I think it is important

for us to address some of those issues that are affecting young people

in this country.

I want to commend those organizations that are out there supplying

information to voters between the ages of 18 and 30 to make sure that

they participate in this election. What has been happening for the last

4 years, and what is going to happen in the next 4 years is very, very

important for the future of our country and also for the future of our

families.

I want to thank Rock the Vote and also the WWE Association, and many

other individuals that are out there, like Mr. Russell Simmons, what

the NAACP is doing, what the people for the American Way are doing, and

also thank what Puff Daddy and other folks out there are doing in

making sure that people have good information. Voter suppression is

very real, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is important for parents or

grandparents or even Members of Congress listening tonight that we

share with them that their loved ones who might be in school do have

the opportunity to register to vote.

In the beginning of October, that clock is going to run out

throughout the country, so we need to make sure they know they can

register. We did have some supervisors of elections or those election

officials in those local communities that were telling them they could

not. Now we are getting that information out. I believe there is a 1975

Supreme Court decision that said that if one is in school and

registered in school, they can be from another State, but they can

register to vote there, because nine times out of ten during the early

voting periods and the election period in early November, they will be

there at that location.

Mr. Speaker, I have my friend and colleague, the gentlewoman from

Cleveland, Ohio (Mrs. Jones), joining me here tonight, but I first just

want to take a moment, since we are talking about democracy, to reflect

on a country that we are saying that we want to institute democracy in.

I think we should be very careful in being the promoters and also the

hood ornament for democracy in the world. We are promoting elections in

Iraq at a time when we know that it is very unsafe, not only for U.N.

workers but for our U.S. troops and the very limited coalition that we

have in Iraq right now.

On the floor here today, Mr. Speaker, we had the interim prime

minister of Iraq addressing the U.S. Congress. He also went over to the

White House and was with the President in a Rose Garden ceremony. It is

one thing to be able to say that we have to be there for the long haul.

As a member of the Committee on Armed Services, I support the effort of

making sure that we achieve our goals in Iraq. I may not support how we

got there, which I do not, that being the preemptive strike, which is

something this country has never engaged in before. There is no ``may''

about it, I do not. But I think it is important we reflect on where we

are right now.

We have had the arguments, hours of arguments on this floor, of how

we got there. I think the American people are fully aware of who made

the decision and who decided that we should take a preemptive strike in

Iraq, without a real plan that provided for a good measured outcome.

The people who made the decision to go with the willing I think is

something that we are going to remember in the future as it relates to

the art of war and in taking a move like we did several months ago.

I could not help but reflect on the prime minister's comments today,

and I also could not help but reflect on what was said at the Rose

Garden about the fact that we are ready for elections in January. Now,

this is not the Kendrick Meek report, this is the report of many news

articles I am holding here in my hand from the events of today. This is

not only the reports of these news organizations but also of anyone

turning on the television and looking at cable or at network

television. Guess what, things in Iraq are not going as well as we are

being told here around the beltway and in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, I think it goes beyond my obligation and the obligation

of all the Members here in the House, be they Republican or Democrat,

to level with the American people about the realities of Iraq, the

realities of taking on an effort in the Middle East where we have had

terrorism for years and years and years.

Fact: Saddam Hussein. Yes, he was a bad guy and he needed to go. But

at what cost? Fact: Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups were not

running the streets of Iraq prior to the preemptive strike. That is a

fact. That is not fiction. That is not the Kendrick Meek report, that

is reality.

The President today said, well, we have to continue to fight the war

in Iraq, because if we leave, then the terrorists will have a hub to be

able to carry out terror on other democracies on the face of the earth.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but to reflect and to comment on that

remark. Who set that stage for that mecca or hub of terrorism?

Now, I am not here to point fingers, I am just here to say that the

world community knows the reason why we have all the terror in Iraq

right now, that could and would be and is a part of global terrorism at

this particular time. And I think it is important if we are going to

build a broader coalition now, and I want to make sure, because

Secretary Rumsfeld today, I must add, was over in the Senate and he

said, well, what is wrong with the elections? We can have elections in

January, but what is wrong with having elections in some places and in

other places where we cannot have them, it is not a perfect world, so

let us just move on with the elections.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but I beg to differ with the Secretary, in

all due respect. That is not the way a democracy operates. Next thing

you know, here in the United States, and thank God for the U.S.

Constitution and some people of goodwill who would stand up against

such an action, if it were said that, well, we can have an election in

Georgia, Alabama, or Mississippi, but in other places we cannot have

it, so whatever the results are from those States, then so be it. Those

are the elected officials that will represent that legislative body or

those cities in those areas or this country.

Mr. Speaker, we need to watch what we say. Just because we can say

it, does not mean that it is right. It is very, very unfortunate that

the Secretary of Defense feels that he can

make those comments. And I wanted to make sure that I came to this

floor tonight to share not only with Members of Congress but also with

the American people that we should disabuse ourselves of such

statements made off the cuff when we are trying to create a democracy.

The coalition in Iraq is not expanding with individuals or countries

that are there to be able to help us in our mission and our goals. The

coalition is getting smaller. I think it is important if we are going

to build a true coalition, then we have to make sure that we have

strong leadership. Mr. Speaker, 1,041 American lives have been taken.

We honor and respect them. As a Member of this Congress and as an

American, I respect their contributions to our country.

I think it is important that Americans not only reflect on their

contributions and their sacrifices, but we need to also make sure that

when we hear something here in Washington, D.C. by individuals that are

being driven around in cars with tinted windows, who have prepared

comments to be able to draw an audience and who believe what they say

should be law, we beg to differ. It is our responsibility and our

resolve and our commitment to this country and to the lives of those

troops and their families goes beyond that.

So whether it be an independent, a Republican, or a Democrat, we have

the responsibility to stand up and say that is not so, Mr. President,

the administration, or whoever it may be; these individuals who would

sit here and give the American people the Potomac two-step that

everything is okay. It is not okay. We have 7,032 troops injured, and

we are at 96 percent of the cost in Iraq. We do not have a coalition,

as the administration will share with you that they are running the

costs and they are taking on the casualties.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to train the Iraqi army, but this

argument goes beyond partisan politics. This goes to the very fiber of

every veteran that has served this country, every veteran that allowed

us to be able to breathe and celebrate the very democracy that we live

in today. Their memory, their honor, their sacrifice is on the line

right now in the world community.

The boldness of some folks here in Washington, D.C., to be able to

say that something is going on in Iraq that the American people cannot

see. I want to share a few facts here. Security failures in Iraq, we

need to get down to what it is worth. I mentioned the casualties, and I

mentioned the injured. Our forces are coming under attack 90 times a

day. That is a twofold increase since winter.

Also, when we look at the new al Qaeda terrorism generated throughout

the world, we are at a cost of $145 billion, and 41 percent of our debt

is handled by foreign countries right now. That is 96 percent of the

bill.

I think it is unacceptable for people to talk about things are going

so well. We need to tell the truth. The truth is no weapons of mass

destruction, no link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. This is not

the report of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Meek); this is what the

President said in the Roosevelt Room when questioned about it. The

facts show there was no link. The mission is not accomplished. The

transition is not a peaceful and stable one that is happening right

now. The attacks on the troops are increasing, not decreasing.

Terrorist opportunities are growing in that region. The fact that the

failures of this administration to come to grips with the reality with

what is happening in Iraq right now is detrimental to our mission.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. Jones).

Mr. Speaker, I want to let the gentlewoman know

how excited I am, not about the prospect but about the reality of the

number of individuals who will vote this election. The stakes are high.

This election is beyond personalities. It is personal. It is about

families and their future.

I once said on the floor that the goal of every grandparent and

parent is to make sure that their children and grandchildren have

better opportunities than they had. That fits everyone, Democrats,

Republicans and Independents. The American people are going to have an

opportunity to have a new direction. There are 45 million Americans

without health care. These are working Americans without health care.

We have the highest deficit in the history of the Republic. We are

knocking on the bank door of China saying, please help us with our debt

because we cannot manage our own money. At the same time, we are in a

war with no real end.

I will repeat again, I support making sure that we reach our

objectives in Iraq, but what I do not support is for us to continue to

carry 96 percent of the costs and 96-plus percent of the casualties

without being able to go to the world community to build a real

coalition in Iraq. It is not good thinking to be able to say we are

going to hang in there and go from a shooting-from-the-hip way of doing

things; we cannot do that. We have the moral authority in the world so

we cannot behave like others. We cannot afford to behave like others.

The rest of the world is looking at this election to see what the

American people do about the future of the world. People talk about a

global war on terror, yes, a number of countries are involved in the

global war on terror, but the real issue is who is involved in Iraq.

Just for a moment, what happened to Osama bin Laden? We had efforts

on Osama bin Laden and also in North Korea and making sure that we kept

the pressure on Iraq as relates to their nuclear programs; maybe we

will be securing the world more. Maybe, just maybe, we will not have

the kind of terror incubator that we have in Iraq now. This is not the

Meek report. The CIA report said either civil war or a lack of not

being able to accomplish our goals that we set out to do in Iraq, one

of the two.

When you follow Secretary Rumsfeld saying we can only have elections

in three-quarters of the country, the rest of the country, we will get

around them, it is not a perfect world; you want to talk about a

prescription for civil war, that is one. That is why it is important

that the American people understand their responsibility in this

upcoming election season.

I am encouraged by the 18- to 30-year-olds who are registering to

vote. I am encouraged by the grandparents and the veterans who are

saying, young person, make sure you carry out your vote. To those

individuals and seniors who are cutting pills in half because they do

not have a prescription drug benefit, they have an opportunity to voice

their opinion.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, this election

is going to be about who votes and who does not vote. This election is

going to be about the future of every American family. We know that

every election is supposed to be about that, but this one is for real.

The President of the United States said today to the interim prime

minister of Iraq, do not worry, the American people will be with him

all the way to help him accomplish the goals that the Iraqi people want

to accomplish. Well, I am not one to hang my hat on polls, but I will

tell the gentlewoman this: the Iraqi people see us as occupiers instead

of liberators. And that is not a reflection on the job that the troops

are doing on the ground.

I want to make sure that Members of Congress understand that there

are a lot of proud men and women who are laying it down right now. I

pray for them every day. I make sure that their families understand

that we appreciate their service to our country. But at the same time,

it is our obligation as leaders here in Washington, D.C. We are

citizens elected to this Congress to make sure that we run this country

in a way that it should be operated and that we make sure that our

troops have what they need and when they need it and we make sure that

we make sound decisions based on what the situation is today and what

the situation will be

in the future; and that is the reason why I am sharing tonight with all

of the people that can hear my voice that it is important that they

look at it for what it is.

There is a term out there that a lot of young people use: it is what

it is. And right now, if I were, hypothetically speaking, the President

of the United States and I am looking at what is going on and I am

getting the CIA reports and I am hearing things that the American

people are not hearing right now and I am turning on the news and I see

what is going on and I am picking up the paper and I am reading the

articles and I am getting all this good information but, better yet, I

am still going to hold on to the fact that we are going to have

elections in January, that lets the world's community know that we are

putting, I believe, politics over principle and over sound thinking.

And the great thing about our democracy is we have the opportunity to

come here and voice our opinion and to be able to share it with the

people who live in our democracy for them to act appropriately, and

acting appropriately would be to think about the facts. A commercial

over here and a commercial over there. That is fine. Some of it is

true, and some of it is fiction. But the bottom line is when we speak

from the White House and when we speak here on this floor, we have to

speak the truth. There is not a lot of time for us to play around and

start talking about, well, I am going to just sway over here and I am

going to embellish a little bit.

The American people deserve better. Congresses before our Congress,

the 108th Congress, knew and hoped that this democracy would move as it

relates to truth, honesty, and dignity. And it is important that we do

not even reflect that. With all due respect, we do not even want to

brush up against that. I am not saying that that is not the case now.

But I am saying we do not brush against that honor that has been laid

out. When I talk about veterans that have served this country, those

that are in Arlington Cemetery right now, resting in peace, we

appreciate their contributions. Every time I go to the airport, I see

Arlington; and I swell up about their contribution. We would not be in

Congress if it were not for them. So when we look at that, it goes

deeper than the politics that we are hearing right now.

So the American people have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, those who

are voting for the first time and those who have voted 100 times, to be

able to make the right decision based on the facts. If their voter

registration card says Green Party, Reform Party, Republican, Democrat,

Libertarian, Independent, whatever their party may be, they have an

obligation on behalf of their family. Family, that is personal. So we

have to make sure we reflect on that.

I am excited. I am just going to let the gentlewoman know I am in no

way feeling that woe is this country because I have faith in the

American people. I know they will make the right decision. We have got

to give them the facts about what is happening, what is really going

on, and let them make their decision.

Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I will just

say, since our time is drawing near to the end, that the American

people have an opportunity to vote and they will. There are record

numbers of new registrants out there in this country, and they are

registering to do something. And they have an opportunity once again to

vote for a new direction as it relates to health care; education;

environment; energy; security for our country, making sure that we have

more containers that are being checked, coming into this country, which

has been found to be one of our greatest terrorist threats.

They have an opportunity to make sure that there are sound decisions,

and a real opportunity for the world community to feel that they can

come to the United States and we can build a real coalition in Iraq; to

be able to make sure that we put on a real hunt for bin Laden; to make

sure that individuals that were responsible for 9/11, that they are not

only brought to justice, but shut down.

So they have that opportunity, and I believe very strongly they are

going to take that opportunity and they are going to swell that vote,

and they are going to vote early, and they are going to make sure that

every member of their family votes, because this election, I believe,

this election, I say it again, is the greatest opportunity that

Americans have had who are able to cast their vote in a very, very,

very long time.

So, I am glad that the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Pelosi) has

led us in the direction of the New Partnership with the American

people, and that we are going to do the things that are going to be

able to help not only working Americans, but those Americans that have

contributed to our country.

If you are on Social Security, you have a place in our partnership.

If you are looking for a job, you have a place in our partnership. If

you are a mother that is trying to make ends meet, you have a place in

our partnership. If you are a veteran that wants to go to the VA and

get assistance within 6 months, you are in our partnership beyond 6

months. That is the situation right now, if you want to see the eye

doctor or whatever the case may be.

If you want to make sure that we build a sound America with sound

education funding and policy and making sure that students that are

crushed by student loans right now, that they get the opportunity to

attain a graduate education so they can compete with the rest of the

world, you are in our partnership.

If you do not want to have to train someone to perform your job

overseas, you are in our Partnership with America to bring about

change.

So I am excited about our leadership here under the gentlewoman from

California (Ms. Pelosi) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. Hoyer) and

so many others that are out there, along with our Democratic Caucus,

but I think it is important that we make sure that American people

understand the opportunity they have.

Mr. Speaker, I will try to live up to that as we

move on. It is a great pleasure to serve with the gentlewoman from

Ohio, with all of the trials and tribulations that her constituents and

the people of Ohio with the loss of jobs.

As we know, in Florida when we talk about health care, 240,000 people

in Florida lost their health care that are working under this

administration. We have an opportunity to turn that around. I am very

proud of the opportunity that we have.

Once again, it is an honor to serve in this House. It is also a

greater honor to be here, to be about the solution.

I will tell you, it is not just Democrats. There are people of good

will in this House that want to do the right thing. It all comes down

to the leadership. It is like our troops in the field. Who does not

support the troops? That is what I want to know. We all support the

troops. We speak in our vote, we speak in our support on the floor, we

speak in our prayers for the troops.

But it is important that we are not blinded by bipartisanship and

about the fact that, oh, well, I have to do this because the leader of

my party or the leader in the White House says that I have to do it,

and we have to stand in solidarity with him or her or whoever it may

be.

We stand in solidarity with the American people, and the American

people have an opportunity through the partnership that we have built

here in this House with our leader, the gentlewoman from California

(Ms. Pelosi), about what we should do and what we have to do, given the

opportunity.

I must say, it has been 10 years since this House has been controlled

by Democrats, and I think it is important with Democrats and some

goodwill Republicans that we put this country on the right track.

With that, I want to thank the gentlewoman for joining us here

tonight.