I thank my friend from Arkansas for yielding, and I would

like to thank you for what you do for the Blue Dog Caucus.

You know, the thing that first attracted me to the Blue Dog Caucus

was the fact that they believe so strongly in fiscal responsibility in

the pay-as-you-go idea, and the fact that we have to tighten our belt,

we have to make some very difficult decisions. It's not easy when there

are things that we need for our district and things that we know we

need here domestically, and yet we can't spend more than we have. And

it's no different than we would in our own home. You don't buy things

that we can't afford. We can't enact legislation, we can't create

bureaucracies that we can't pay for. And that's why I'm so proud to be

a member of the Blue Dog Caucus.

I did just return from Iraq just a few days ago. And I couldn't help,

while I was there, noticing immediately the amount of money that we

have spent in Iraq. You know, when you look at the fact that you ride

along and you see that we have literally created, built whole cities in

the middle of the desert, in the middle of this expansive environment

we have actually created cities and the amount of money, the amount of

cement, the amount of wood that we've used to build these bases and the

amount of material that we have there. I can remember that in one of

the bases we pulled up to one area, it was huge, and there was nothing

but electric transformers in a huge field; and those were transformers

that they were using to put new electric and bring new power to

different places in Iraq. And then we drove a little further and there

was another area with nothing but Humvees and another area with nothing

but bulldozers. And you can't help but realize just how much money and

how much time and expense we're expending to rebuild Iraq.

And during the course of our conversation while we were there, we

were talking about some of the things to one of the members of the

military, one of the things that they needed there. And I couldn't help

but think back in my district in upstate New York, back in Utica, there

are things that we need that we don't have. We need improvements to our

airport that we don't have. We need improvements to our roads. And much

like your district in Arkansas, we have been waiting for a connection

between Utica and the city of Binghamton, a Route 12 extension. We've

been waiting for years and years, since before I was born, for that;

and still we talk about it. And yet we spend billions of dollars. You

quoted the figure $16 million an hour we are spending in Iraq. We

continue to spend it, and we've been doing it for years and years.

And while we continue to spend that money, we continue to spend

resources that are critical to us while countries like China are

continuing to invest

their money in their own economy, in creating jobs within their

country. We need to be spending our money to create jobs in our

country.

And, you know, while I was in Iraq, the one thing that I was struck

by probably more than anything else is the incredible job that our

troops are doing. Anybody that you talk to that's been to Iraq, the

first thing they talk about is the incredible job that our troops are

doing. And I couldn't help but think that any just cause anywhere in

the world that we ask our troops to perform and complete, I have utter

confidence that they can do it. Our military is just an incredible

organization. They do what is asked of them and much, much more. And

they have done the same in Iraq. And I think that it's time that we

give them more direction in terms of a mission and that we start to

give the Iraqi people a little more ability to stand on their own. I

think when we start to bring our troops home, when we start to allow

them to stand up and handle their own affairs, they will do it, and

they will do it in a good way and in a fine way and we will be there to

help them.

But, you know, there was a book written about 2,500 years ago by the

Chinese general Sun Tzu, and it was called ``The Art of War.'' And in

that he writes an interesting paragraph and he says that in any

extended confrontation, regardless of how wise a nation's counselors

are, no country can win in a prolonged war.

This war has been prolonged far too long. It is time, I believe, for

us to focus upon what is important here domestically, that we stop

focusing on spending so much money in Iraq and we begin to focus again

on the things that are happening here in this country. So I believe

that it's time that we allow the country of Iraq to stand up for

itself, and that we begin to bring our troops home.

I thank you, and I yield back.