Mr. Speaker, I thank the

gentleman from Arkansas. It is an honor for me to be here tonight.

I would like to say to the gentleman from Arkansas, that is exactly

right. One of the things I plan on talking about tonight are really two

things, the small business tax cuts that we established in this

Congress this past May, and also the Iraq Accountability Act, because I

think it is telling.

There are a couple of housekeeping things if I may mention, Mr.

Speaker. I know the gentleman from Tennessee was just speaking about an

Eisenhower moment and talked about reaching out to those Americans from

both sides of the aisle and letting them know about this common sense

leadership we are trying to propose. What he mentioned was we need to

listen and look at some common sense solutions. I think that is what

people appreciate about the Blue Dogs. We are willing to reach across

the aisle when need be to move our country in a new direction.

I know there are a lot of folks back home I know, some of which are

my wife right now. My wife Jenny is at home. I left this morning. I

spoke at the Rotary Club and I was at a school for the first day of

classes starting back today back in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Then I

had a meeting, and then I rushed down here in Washington.

It is an honor for me to be here tonight. It is tough as far as

leaving your wife, and we are blessed with a 9 month old daughter

Maggie Murphy, who we had her swimming out there yesterday. She was

adorable.

I know this is a different form of public service. I know the

gentleman from Arkansas mentioned that I served in the military. I am

very proud of my military service. I am very proud that I wore that

U.S. Army uniform for the first time back in 1993, and now that we are

here in 2007, I am proud to be a Member of Congress. This is a

different form of public service, but one just as important. I know the

sacrifices that we have to give up, leaving our families to come down

here to Washington and then to go back home on the weekends. It is a

tough schedule, but one that we promised to do to the best of our

abilities.

I know my colleague over here from New York, Mr. Arcuri, Mike Arcuri

just got married the other day. I want to congratulate him on his

marriage. I think he believes in what we all believe in, that we love

our troops so much, I think he spent his honeymoon going over to see

those troops in Iraq, leaving his new wife, Sabrina, to go over to

those troops.

We had a conversation on this floor tonight when we were voting

talking about his trip over there, how he went and let those troops

know, especially the ones that are from New York, from his district,

that he cares about them, that he took the time out of his schedule to

be there with them, to break bread with them and let them know that he

is fighting for them here in Washington.

I believe those troops understand what the stakes are right now. They

understand that this United States House of Representatives, this body

supports the troops 100 percent. We may disagree with our colleagues on

the foreign policy and the foreign aspects of it, but never question

the commitment and the honor that our troops are serving with. I

believe that is why we all take time out of our schedules to let them

know we care for them, to make sure that we draft the most effective

policy to support them and do everything possible to make sure their

families back at home know we are supporting them 100 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk first, because after I left that Rotary

Club this morning and then I was at that opening day of school at the

Abrams Hebrew School in Yardley, Pennsylvania. I went down the road to

two small businesses that are in Yardley, Pennsylvania. My district, as

you know are, is all of Bucks County, northeast Philadelphia and a

small slice of Montgomery County.

But when you look at Bucks County, there are 60,000 small businesses

in Bucks County. Ninety-nine percent of our businesses are small

business. And

what we passed in this House, I am very proud about, is $1.3 billion in

tax cuts for those small businesses. We did it not just writing a blank

check and passing that debt that we talk about to our kids, we did it

in a fiscally responsible way, the way that Blue Dogs believe, a pay-

as-you-go system.

Everyone is real quick to write tax breaks and tax cuts, but never

figure out to how to pay for it. Just increase our debt. Increase our

debt. When the President signs $1.7 billion in tax cuts, it sounds

great. Everyone wants a tax break. I want a tax break. But how are you

going to pay for it, Mr. President? Not on the backs of our kids. Not

on the backs of the next generation. We need the pay-as-you-go.

So when my daughter was born 9 months ago, when Maggie Murphy was

born, she was born in Lower Bucks Hospital, she was born in this

country owing $29,000 to our national debt. We owe $9 trillion in this

country. A lot of that debt we owe to foreign countries, China, Korea,

Japan. We borrowed $367 billion from Mexico.

So that means per month, per month we average about $21 billion just

to pay the interest on this debt. It is like a credit card. You have to

pay interest on your credit card before you even get into paying the

principal off. Per month we have to pay $21 billion in interest.

To make a comparison, budgets are choices. Budgets are moral

documents. Per month in the Federal Government we spend $21 billion

just on the interest, but we only pay $5 billion on the Federal level

on education. And to keep America more competitive, we need to invest

in education. So that is why it is important that we partner with small

businesses. That is what we do with the $1.3 billion in tax cuts.

How it worked out, I had two business owners, one was a CEO, his name

is Neil Matheson today, and when he started a business, he was the only

employee. You fast forward it, now it is a 250 person business. They

have 140 of those employees in my district, and I am proud that many of

them live and work in Bucks County. I talked to him. And another

president of a small business was Kevin Kruse.

I talked to Neil Matheson and I talked to Kevin Kruse, and I talked

to them about the challenges they faced before I was running for

Congress and then I talked to them when I became a Member of Congress.

We passed this, and they talked about how important this bill was that

we passed.

Per year, they commented, Kevin Kruse specifically commented, big

corporations which employ Americans, big corporations can sell if they

needed some money infusion, they can sell stocks or go public. Small

businesses don't have that option. So they have to worry about their

cash intake and their cash flow.

So what Mr. Kruse said today when I was with him, he said this tax

cut that the Democratic Congress passed, that the Blue Dogs championed,

saves my business $13,000 more in deductions per year now because we

established it through the IRS Tax Code through a pay-as-you-go system.

That is serious money. That is serious money. That is why they stood

with me today when we talked about it.

Before I joined the House of Representatives, Mr. Speaker, I talked

about more accountability and greater oversight in Iraq and over the

Iraqi war operations. I am a proud Member of the Blue Dog Coalition. I

have been calling for accountability in Iraq on the floor of this great

body for 8 months now. In fact, some of my Blue Dog colleagues have

been demanding common sense oversight on the floor of this House for

more than 4 years before I even got here.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem with these repeated calls for action

is they seem to be falling on deaf ears down the road at 1600

Pennsylvania Avenue at the White House.

Mr. Speaker, the American public and our families at home are

demanding some answers. Earlier this year we introduced House

Resolution 97, to set up a Truman-type commission to track fraud, waste

and abuse in Iraq. This was after the reports from the Special

Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction came to the House Armed

Services Committee, came to the committee that I have the honor to

serve on, and he said there is $9 billion missing and 14,000 weapons

that are missing in Iraq. But recently, the Government Accountability

Office, again, nonpartisan, came and reported that now the number of

weapons that are missing in Iraq went from 14,000 to 190,000. Think

about that; 190,000 weapons, and 110,000 of those weapons were AK-47

rifles.

Now, when I was in the military when I joined, I used to sing a

cadence when you are running in the morning, we call it PT, physical

training. The cadence said, ``Used to date a beauty queen; now I date

my M-16.''

See, you held that M-16 rifle to you as if it was your girlfriend or

your loved one, because you can never miss it. When you are in the

field at night and you fell asleep and you had a few hours to catch

some shuteye, you tied it around your leg so no one would steal it from

you.

That is called accountability. That is what the Blue Dogs stand for.

That is why I joined this organization when I came to Congress. I was

honored to be selected and to be part of them.

You think about 110,000 weapons just missing in Iraq. Just missing.

Imagine those weapons in the hands of Muqtada al-Sadr's militia.

The accountability is not happening in Iraq. It is not our troops'

fault, it is the Iraqi people's fault, because they are not stepping up

to the plate. You know, you lose a weapon in the U.S. military, you are

probably going to be court-martialed. In Iraq, you are probably given a

new one. That is a major difference and one that we can't stand for.

These rifles are like the ones I used to carry when I was in Baghdad,

Iraq. When I was there four summers ago, Mr. Speaker, August was called

fire month. The month of August in Iraq is called fire month because it

gets so hot. Imagine our troops over in Iraq right now, in 130 degree

weather, with all that equipment on, every day working their tails off

to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America,

that oath that they took when they became members of our great

military.

You look back at January when the President made the decision to

escalate our troops over there. I spoke out against it. I thought it

was the wrong policy. But the President overrode our decisions in

Congress and he said, just give us 6 to 9 months for a political

solution.

You look now, and I said then I am against the policy but I hope this

surge works. I hope the escalation of troops works. I want our troops

in Iraq to succeed. I spent months of my life there, and I care for the

Iraqi people and I love our troops.

But now it has been 9 months. Now you look at what is really

happening. They said 6 to 9 months to allow a political solution to

happen. Nine months later, you had the Iraqi Parliament take a summer

vacation. Take a summer vacation, when our troops are fighting every

single day.

You had the Shia government that is in power now, before the Sunnis

were in power, now it is the Shia, it is a democracy, they have to

reach across the table and work with the Sunnis. They have got to put

their personal beliefs aside for one Iraq.

So the Shia leadership, President Maliki said, okay, we are going to

reach these benchmarks. We are going to do these commonsense things

that we pledged to do now for years. They still haven't done them.

Things like sharing oil revenue with the Sunnis, they haven't done

them.

So what political solution do we have right now, Mr. Speaker? We have

the Sunnis saying I quit. I quit. You don't see our troops quit. You

see our troops standing up every single day.

For those listeners at home, you make sure when you see a troop,

whether it is in a restaurant or airport or train station, you don't

have to give them a long speech. You might not agree with the foreign

policy of the United States of America. But I ask my fellow Americans,

Mr. Speaker, to make sure that you tell those troops when you see them

out there in every day America, say thank you very much for serving our

country. That is all you need to say. It means the world to them.

I took my wife out, I had a date night the other night. I took my

wife out, we went to Red Lobster. My wife's grandmother watched our

little daughter. We went to date night, and, Mr. Speaker, after dinner

she went to the restroom to use it at the Red Lobster.

I am waiting in the car, and waiting to get into the Red Lobster was

a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard. He was there with his

family. I took the keys out of the car. I ran up to him real quick. I

was dressed not like a Congressman, I was just like a regular guy, just

a regular shirt and I had shorts on him. I said to him, I said, hey,

troop, I just want you to know that I appreciate your service to our

country.

Then we started talking a little bit and at the end I told him I was

a congressman and gave him my card. I said, If there is anything I can

ever do, you let me know, and I will keep you in my prayers.

He got choked up and said, Thank you, Mr. Congressman, I appreciate

that.

I told him, Just call me ``Patrick.'' You don't have to call me ``Mr.

Congressman.''

We have meetings in Washington on the Armed Services Committee. I am

also honored to serve on the Intelligence Committee. We also have

meetings of the Blue Dog Democrats. We talk about these things at the

Blue Dog Democrat meetings. We care with every fiber of our being for

these troops.

Mr. Speaker, I was at a meeting with the Blue Dogs at 5:00, or 1700

as they say in military time. I passed around a sheet talking about how

can we take care of our troops.

When troops get orders to deploy, sometimes they don't have a lot of

time. Sometimes they have rent. Well, they don't need to have an

apartment if they are in Iraq or Afghanistan for 15 months, so they

want to break their lease. There is Federal law, there is the

Service members Civil Relief Act, so they can break their lease. It is a

commonsense bill that this Congress passed. There is a bill that says

expand that now to allow our troops who have cell phones, a 1-year or

2-year program, why not allow the troops to break their cell phone

contracts. Their cell phones are from Verizon or Cingular, and they

don't have cell phones over in Baghdad or in Afghanistan. That

commonsense approach says let them break their cell phone lease under

Federal law. That is the type of backing that they need.

To get back to the Iraq Accountability Act, Mr. Speaker, you look at

what this Iraq Accountability Act has done to shed light on fraud,

waste and abuse. The report that I just mentioned about the 190,000

weapons is a disgrace when you talk about accountability.

Last month, there were a total of 73 criminal investigations related

to contract fraud in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan; 73 criminal

investigations. That is 73 investigations on contracts totaling $5

billion. That is billion with a ``b,'' Mr. Speaker. The charges so far

identify more than $15 million in bribes. If there is ever a time for a

new direction in Iraq, now is the time, Mr. Speaker. If there is ever a

time for accountability and oversight, now is the time, Mr. Speaker.

And as long as my fellow Blue Dogs and I are here in the House's

great body, we will keep calling, we will keep fighting for what

American families and what American troops deserve, and that is

civilian leadership that is just as smart and savvy as those troops on

the ground.

I want to thank again the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Ross, for

allowing me to speak. I appreciate your leadership role with the Blue

Dog Democrats.

When I was home, Mr. Speaker, and I was talking to those families in

Bucks County, many told me, Mr. Congressman, I like that are you a Blue

Dog and that you are standing up for fiscal responsibility and you

stand up for change. I like the fact that you stand up for a new

direction. I like the fact that you talk about that $9 trillion in debt

that we have right now and how it is immoral to pass it on to our kids,

because it is. I like the fact that the Blue Dogs stand up and say you

have a pay-as-you-go system, not a pass-the-buck system. That is what

happened before. That's leadership.

And, Mr. Speaker, to the gentleman from Arkansas, to my colleague

from the great State of New York, it is a great honor to be among your

midst as a fellow Blue Dog.