Mr. Speaker, I thank all four of my colleagues, Mr.

Gilchrest, Mr. Dent, Mr. Bishop, and Mr. Israel. I wanted to be here

simply for the novelty of Republicans and Democrats trying to talk

about where we could find common ground.

My basic view is that we made a mistake going in given that we didn't

find weapons of mass destruction. But I tend to think it would be a

mistake to leave precipitously. I think we went in on a bipartisan

basis, and I think we could leave on a bipartisan basis. I just don't

think we are as far apart in some ways as some may think.

I do think there should be a Status of Forces Agreement instead of a

U.N. resolution as an occupying nation. If the Iraqis don't want us

there, we will leave. I feel we attacked them; they didn't attack us.

And we have an obligation before we leave to replace their army, their

police, and their border patrol. That is really one of your shared

principles. But if they want us to leave before, then they are a

sovereign nation. They could ask us to leave and we would.

I will also close with this because I think it would be nice to have

more of a dialogue rather than just speeches from us, but I think the

Iraq Study Group is something that Democrats agreed to in principle and

so did Republicans. And I agree that they left a little bit of

discretion as to what they meant and we could each view it in the way

that we want to, and so that would have to be worked out. But the basic

principles of the Iraq Study Group, to my mind, should be voted on and

supported by both sides of the aisle, specifically getting the

Americans and the coalition forces out of doing police work.

Secondly, getting the Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds to work out their

differences. They said with consequence if they didn't. I think there

should be a timeline. I just think it should be not by 2/08. And,

thirdly, to get the nations around Iraq to dialogue and we should be

dialoguing with them, including Iran and Syria.

And I might add a former Marine, and I guess always a

Marine, who was wounded in battle in Vietnam and was left on the

battlefield for 3 hours before he was brought to safety, and we will

always be grateful for that service.

I thank you for your question.

What was stunning about the 9/11 Commission was it was Republicans

and Democrats, liberals and conservatives all trying to find common

ground for addressing what was really a frightening sea change in our

society, and that was the recognition that there was a real threat. And

they called it ``Islamist terrorism,'' which the Islamist community

needs to deal with as well. I mean, it is not Islamists, it is these

radical Islamist terrorists. But the Iraqi Study Group had that same

approach, Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives making

an assessment of the problem, and then recommending what needed to

happen.

I would like to suggest something. And I would be interested, Mr.

Israel, how you would react to this, and that is, Mr. Petraeus and our

ambassador are going to make a report in September. And I was thinking,

you know, there could be a view they have a vested interest.

So one of the things that I would like to promote is that this same

Iraqi Study Group go back to Iraq and say,

okay, this is what we found then, this is what we recommended. This is

what General Petraeus is recommending and our ambassador. We either

verify it or don't, or have subtle changes to it or maybe significant

changes. But in other words, bring this third party back in to make an

analysis since they already have credibility, and clearly General

Petraeus does and our ambassador does as well. But I would be curious

to know if any of you think there is merit to that idea.

If the gentleman will yield, when I was there this last

time, what I found for the first time was that when the Iraqis got

together to form a government last year, they were like someone

described a sixth grade dance. The guys were there, the girls were

there. Maybe once or twice there would be a little interaction, and

they would go back. But nobody was dancing.

Now you are starting to see Sunnis, Shias and Kurds trying to see

some common ground, and they are coming back to us and saying, don't

rush us. But one of them said to me, I thought it was interesting, he

said, ``You are complaining about the fact that we may take a break in

the summer. What about your monthly break?'' They said, ``You are

asking Sunnis, Shias and Kurds to work together. How come you guys

aren't working together?'' They are starting to come back and throw

that at us.

The difference is they are in an environment where they can get

killed any day of the week, and yet we are telling them, find common

ground. If they found common ground, probably some of that killing

would talk.

But I am sorry to take so much of the time. I am just trying to add

to your point that they are saying why don't we practice what we

preach?

To guarantee it would actually come to the floor of the

House, maybe we could put your name first and mine second. But I would

love to work with you on that.

I would just like to thank you again for getting us

together. This has really been a pleasure. I just admire all of you

here tonight, and thank you for including me.