Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of the

time.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the evening, we have heard some very, very

interesting speeches. I listened with great respect to all of them. I

agreed with some, I disagreed with some, I wasn't sure about some.

Nevertheless, it was a good debate at a high level. I paid special

attention to the very distinguished Speaker of the House because in her

opening comments, she talked about how Monday, Veterans Day, America

honored our veterans. She spoke about the Veterans appropriations bill

in great, glowing terms. I agree with that. It is a really good bill.

It provides a lot of benefits for the veterans. There are 400,000

veterans claims backed up. That bill provided money to hire additional

adjudicators to get rid of that backlog and get the veterans what they

need.

The problem is that as she spoke about the importance of this bill

and what a great bill it was and great bill it is, she failed to say

that the House passed it on June 15, the Senate passed it in September,

and here we are in November still waiting to get that bill on the House

floor.

I say, Madam Speaker, let's vote on the VA appropriations bill.

I mentioned the fact that there were great speeches. But, Mr.

Speaker, tonight we will not be voting or be recorded on how those

speeches went, or what those speeches said, or what those speeches

included. We are not going to be voting on opinions. We are not going

to be voting on politics. We are going to be voting on what is in this

bill. What has been said about this bill is not necessarily what is

actually written in the bill. But we are going to vote for what is

written in that bill. We will be held accountable for our vote on what

that bill says, not on what some speaker said about it.

One of the things that I mentioned in my opening comments that I was

really offended by is that this legislation gives constitutional

protection to terrorists, the same constitutional protection that all

of our constituents enjoy. I refer to page 3 of the bill itself,

``Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect the rights under

the United States Constitution of any person in the custody or under

the physical jurisdiction of the United States.''

Now, that gives terrorists the same protection that your constituents

have. And that's just not right. By giving them that protection, do we

give them for example, do we have to read them their Miranda rights if

we capture them on the battlefield? Do we have to allow them to pay

bail and get out of jail or get out of detention? What kind of rights

will we be giving to terrorists with just this one sentence that says

they shall have rights under the Constitution? These are terrorists,

Mr. Speaker. These aren't even people who are signatories to the Geneva

Convention. They don't play by any rules. They do whatever they must

do, and they have killed thousands and thousands of Americans, and they

have killed thousands and thousands of the Muslim populations.

Now, something about this bill, on page 6 of this bill, ``After the

conclusion of the reduction and transition of United States Armed

Forces to a limited presence as required by this section, the Secretary

of Defense may deploy or maintain members of the Armed Forces in Iraq

only for the following missions.'' Now, pay attention to this because

this is what you will be allowing. For those of you that think you're

getting troops out of Iraq, this is what this bill will permit. The

Armed Forces in Iraq can be there for the following missions:

``Protecting United States diplomatic facilities, United States Armed

Forces, and American citizens.'' We do that now. That is one of the

things that we are doing right now.

So you think you're getting out of that. This bill keeps you in that.

The next paragraph, ``Conducting limited training, equipment, and

providing logistical and intelligence support to the Iraqi Security

forces.'' We're doing that now. So if you think this bill is going to

change anything, it doesn't because you are allowing them to stay

to do the same thing that they are doing now.

The next paragraph, ``Engaging in targeted counterterrorism

operations against al Qaeda, al Qaeda affiliated groups, and other

terrorist organizations in Iraq.'' Mr. Speaker, we're doing that now.

On page 12, we go to the Iraqi Security Forces Fund provided in this

bill. ``For the `Iraq Security Forces Fund', $500 million, Provided,

that such funds shall be available to the Secretary of Defense,

notwithstanding any other provision of law, for the purpose of allowing

the Commander, Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq, or the

Secretary's designee, to provide assistance, with the concurrence of

the Secretary of State, to the security forces of Iraq.'' Mr. Speaker,

we are doing that now. So if you think we're making a change here, read

the bill.

It goes on to say, ``Including the provision of equipment, supplies,

services, training, facility and infrastructure repair, renovation, and

construction, and funding, and to provide training, reintegration,

education and employment programs for concerned local citizens, former

militia members and detainees and former detainees.'' Mr. Speaker,

we're doing all that now.

So this bill doesn't make very many changes if you think this gets

you out of Iraq. It doesn't. If you read the bill, you will see that it

doesn't. Now, these are things that we would be allowed to do under

this bill. But if this bill were successful, and it will not be because

I have an idea the President would veto it in its present form, we

would have to do all of these same things that we are doing today but

with a smaller force, a smaller force, minus the surge, for example.

The change in policy that we all demanded early on came about, and it

was called the ``surge.'' The surge has had many positive effects. When

you get to the point that The New York Times and the L.A. Times and the

Washington Post are writing stories about the positive effects of the

surge, you have to admit there is something real there in the surge. So

do you want to go back and have to do all of the same things we are

doing today with a smaller force? I don't think so.

We will have a motion to recommit. And if that motion to recommit is

successful, we will have a bill that we can all vote for and that I

believe the President would be willing to sign. So let's vote based on

what is in this bill, not what the speeches say about it, not about the

politics, not about the opinions, but let's actually vote on what is in

this bill and let's support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and

anywhere else in the world where they might be deployed. We owe them no

less. This bill is not a good bill today. Let's vote against it tonight

and vote for the motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, this motion to recommit is a

simple forthwith motion. That means a vote for this motion will allow

the House to immediately vote tonight on a bill that can pass the

Congress and be signed into law. That means that our troops in harm's

way will get the funding they need before Congress leaves town for a 2-

week Thanksgiving recess.

The motion would amend the bill to strike the provisions which have

nothing to do with providing for our troops and are nothing more than

political gamesmanship. The motion would strip the provisions that give

our enemies a complete blueprint and timeline for troop withdrawal. The

motion would strip the provisions in the bill which signal to our

troops and our enemies that Congress will not provide any more funding

for our troops, except for withdrawal. The motion would strip the

provisions in the bill that substitute politicians' judgments on troop

deployment for the judgment of our military commanders in the field.

At the same time, we leave intact the $50 billion in critical funding

included in the bill. We leave intact the prohibition on torture, which

has been adopted previously by this Congress and Congresses before. But

we strip the new provisions which could give terrorists killing our

soldiers and our citizens constitutional protections under our legal

system.

We modify provisions to more clearly express Congress's commitment to

our troops and to bringing them home safely in victory as soon as

possible. We leave intact a new requirement that the President submit

to the Congress within the next 3 months a comprehensive, long-term

strategy to achieve stability in the Middle East over the next 5 years.

As events of the last few months have shown, the situation on the

ground has, and we all hope will, continue to improve dramatically.

Congress has and will continue to debate the proper course of the war,

as it should. However, we should not and cannot vote to hold troop

funding hostage to that debate. The only ones hurt by that are our

troops and their families.

As we go home to enjoy the holidays with our families, how can any of

us look our soldiers' families in the eye and explain to them that we

are withholding their funding so that we can score political points.

That is just wrong. Our soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen and their

families deserve more from all of us.

I urge adoption of this motion.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.