I thank the gentleman from South Carolina, and I wanted

to say, as we go into the Memorial Day work period, certainly the war

in Iraq is going to be on everybody's mind. I think it is very

important for us as a Congress and for us as a Nation to acknowledge

the great accomplishments that have taken place in the war against

terror.

Foremost, we saw last year a constitution drafted by the people in

Iraq, an election, December 15, in which 300 political parties

participated, and now a government, their first government, an elected

government that will take place for 4 years, led by Mr. Malaki.

We look forward to working with the emerging democracy in Iraq, as it

will be a huge anchor for freedom throughout the Middle East and

throughout the world. This is a very important significant development,

and while the press buries these things on page C or C section on page

16, it should be front-page, bold-type news. It never will be in this

town, but the American people know it.

I have the honor of representing five military installations in

southeast Georgia, including the 48th Brigade and the 3rd Infantry

Division, which has had so many soldiers over there. We have lost many

constituents.

Yet, as we talk to those soldiers one on one, the people who have

actually been to Iraq, not because they heard stories at a cocktail

party or they read something in the New York Times, but people who have

been there, not just once but two times, three times; they are very

proud of the progress that has been made. They are very mindful of the

sacrifices of the soldiers who will not be coming home on this Memorial

Day with the rest of us.

We owe it to them to continue this mission and stick with it. Mr.

Blair was in America today with the President and showing international

unity on it. Now is not the time to cut and run as so many people are

suggesting in Washington D.C.

Secondly, I want to talk about immigration. Finally, the Senate has

passed an immigration bill. That is all we can say about it. It doesn't

appear to be a very strong bill, doesn't appear to be a bill that is

going to pass the House. We feel in the House, you have to secure the

border. We are in favor of some sort of fence.

We believe, and Dave Dreier has a bill, that we need to have a

biometric ID card for the people who are over here working on a

temporary visa. On the subject of temporary visas, we believe that you

have to have a program in which the employer and the employees are

protected to know who is legal and who is illegal.

We are going to go into this thing open-minded in the House, but I

can say this, that one thing that we have a lot of unity in is we don't

want to support any kind of amnesty program, and we are not going to do

that.

Thirdly, when we come back from this work period, we are going to

continue to work on our tax policy. We are experiencing the lowest

unemployment rate since, well, actually, a lower common rate than we

had in the 1970s, the 1980s, the 1970s and the 1960s. It is at 4.7

percent. We have more jobs being created now, 5 million in fact, since

the Bush tax cuts went in place in 2003.

We are going to keep the economy going through a smart appropriations

process. We have passed four and a half appropriations bills. We are

going to pass 11 of them before we break for the July recess. If we

don't make that deadline, we will still keep the trains running on time

and still stay ahead of the historic schedule of Congress. In these

appropriation bills, we are cutting spending and staying within the

budget.

We passed tonight, and Mr. McHenry had mentioned ANWR. If you can

think about the Alaskan wildlife reserve, it is the size of a

basketball court. The proposed drilling area is the size of a $1 bill

on an entire basketball court. Yet, if you think about the oil that

comes are from there, if President Clinton had not vetoed that bill in

1995, today domestic oil supply would be 20 percent higher.

We need to have all the domestic oil supply working for us and

producing that we can, yet at the same time we need to continue our

drive to ethanol and to alternative fuels.

Now, the gentleman from South Carolina introduced and passed recently

a very important bill on hydrogen, giving awards for people who

advanced the science of hydrogen technology the furthest. I think it is

a very good bill, that passed with bipartisan support in the House. But

we need to continue that kind of research on lithium batteries, on

ethanol, on biodiesel and any kind of flex fuel.

The bill I have introduced, H.R. 4409, along with Eliot Engel of New

York, is a great step in that direction. We need to do everything we

can to reduce our dependency on foreign oil, and what H.R. 4409 does is

reduce our domestic consumption by 20 percent in the next 20 years.

Finally, let me just say this: We are seeing a lot of work coming out

of Washington. A lot of times the press doesn't like to report on the

good news, but we have had a couple of good weeks, and we are going to

continue to work hard on behalf of the American people.