I thank my friend for yielding. The job of the American

troops in Iraq is to fight for the cause for which we have sent them to

fight, and they are doing an honorable and brave and magnificent job;

and we are all proud of them and we all support them. The job of the

President, as the leader of the executive branch and the Commander in

Chief is to make policy decisions as to how and where to use those

forces. And we have grave doubts about whether he has made the right

decisions in Iraq. In fact, the record shows he has made a series of

poor decisions that put the country in great trouble.

But the job of the Congress is to oversee and ask the questions as to

whether the policymakers in the executive branch, from the President on

down, are doing the job that we want them to do. This Congress, this

majority in Congress has failed to do that job, has failed to ask the

questions that need to be asked:

Why did the Pentagon ignore the advice of the Chief of Staff of the

Army, General Shinseki, and send fewer than half the number of troops

that he recommended? Why did the administration ignore the advice of

their own State Department experts and immediately disband the Baathist

Party, the whole thing? Why did they further ignore the advice of those

experts and disband the Iraqi Army, the whole thing?

Why did they not guard the ammo dumps that are now providing the fire

power that is making IEDs that are killing Americans every day? Why did

they not properly set up supervision of the prisons so that we have the

national scandal of Abu Ghraib and the grave damage it has done to the

reputation of this country around the world?

And I think the central question that vexes us tonight is why have we

still not organized our intelligence functions on the ground such that

we can't predict and stop the actions of maybe 25,000 people in a

country of 24 million people? Why is it that the resistance is always a

step ahead, that the ability to stop them is a rare occurrence? The

fact of the matter is the Congress hasn't done the job that it needs to

do because the majority is serving as a rubber stamp for the policies

of the administration, rather than as a coequal branch asking the tough

questions that ought to be asked.

Let's start with these: Do we have the intelligence forces on the

ground to figure out where the resistance fighters are, who the

resistance fighters are, and what they might do next? Have we reached

out to our allies in the Arab and Muslim world who deal with this

problem on a daily basis to get the best of their practices and the

best of their advice? The numbers of Iraqi forces, we were told before

the 2004 election in this country, that several hundred Iraqi security

forces were trained and ready to step up and defend their own country.

Rather than growing, it seems that number is shrinking. It dropped

precipitously after the 2004 election in this country. It has never

been predictable. It has never been stable. It has never been

measurable.

The job of the Congress is to ask the hard questions and come up with

the right answers. But if you deny the fact that the questions have to

be asked, as the majority has, you will never come up with the right

answers. You will lose the faith of the American people, and you will

undercut the mission of those in the field. We support, respect, and

admire the efforts of those in the field. That is why we should be

asking the hard questions.

I would like to yield to my friend from California who is not only

asking good questions but providing some of the answers, my friend Mrs.

Davis.