Mr. Speaker, I know the hour draws near, and

we have to conclude the day's business. And I want to join my

colleagues from across the country who serve with me on the Armed

Services Committee to make the point that this is just the beginning of

this discussion. We have not had time tonight to talk about recruiting

and retention and the developments that have occurred in those areas.

We have not talked about equipment and the need to replenish the

equipment that not only the active duty force is using and leaving

behind but the National Guard as well.

I know my colleague Mr. Cooper from Tennessee hears, as I do, from

returning soldiers and marines about all the equipment that is not

coming home that would be available in my part of the country to fight

fires and respond to natural disasters, to help on our border in the

southern regions. Just recently I had a chance to visit with the Marine

Corps leadership; and if I am not mistaken, the number that they shared

with me that is necessary to replenish all the equipment that the

Marine Corps is leaving behind is on the order of $5 billion, a very

significant number.

So I know we want to leave a little bit of time for Mr. Spratt and

Mr. Skelton to conclude, but I hope that this discussion will continue,

particularly that we can focus on the real changes we face when it

comes to retention and recruiting; and I know my good friend Mr.

Skelton is well aware of this in the part of our country in the

Midwest.