Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Mr. Larson's leadership on

this.

I wanted to talk about three hard realities in Iraq. It is very easy,

tempting when we are in the middle of a struggle, as our Armed Forces

are, to forget harsh realities and to become emboldened by the rhetoric

that is associated with war. But I think it is very important for us,

when our sons and daughters and husbands and wives are there, to just

take a very cold, harsh, realistic look at what is really going on in

Iraq. This is not a moment for rose-colored glasses. It is a moment for

reality. And I want to talk about the three realities in Iraq today,

because basically the debate over Iraq is really twofold.

One side says that we should just keep doing what we are doing. We

will just trust the President to make the decisions as he has made them

in Iraq. We won't question them. We won't ask to accelerate them. We

won't question the strategy. Congress will just sit back and let George

Bush decide what to do in Iraq.

Others of us take a different approach that says the status quo is

inadequate, that we cannot expect to keep doing the same thing in Iraq

and expect a different result. So we believe we need some changes in

Iraq. And I want to talk about some three realities about why we need a

change, why the status quo is unacceptable, unacceptable in Iraq.

Number one, the security situation. The reality in Iraq is that the

current strategy proposed by the Bush administration is resulting in

things not only not staying the same but getting worse. If you take a

look at the Brookings Institution, you can go online and take a look at

the Brookings Institution's Web site. Anybody can Google that to find

Brookings. You will find the statistics that I want to talk about

tonight.

Fatalities in Iraq of Armed Forces are not only going down; they are

going up. Compared to May 2003 and May 2005, we are now experiencing

greater loss of our sons and daughters in Iraq than we were 2 years

ago, 3 years ago. Those are going up, regrettably. The Bush plan is not

working when it comes to protecting our men and women in uniform.

When you looked at the wounded in the Brookings Institution report,

regrettably, they are not going down; they are going up, compared to

2 1/2 years ago. When you look at Iraqi fatalities compared to the

same time in February, March, May 2005, they are going up. When you

look at the number of car bombs in May 2004, to May 2006, they are

going up. When you look at Iraqi civilians killed, in fact, the number

of Iraqi civilians killed compared to the same period about 3 years

ago, they are three times higher per month. And I think we rightfully

care about Iraqi civilian fatalities from a sense of humanity and from

a sense of the American spirit.

When you look at the number of multiple fatality bombings, they are

up by a factor of 50 times higher than they were 3 years ago, a 50

times increase in multiple fatality bombings that the Iraqis are

experiencing. When you look at crime-related deaths, they are up 50

times what they were over 2 years ago. When you look at the number of

daily attacks, they are up compared to May 2004. When you look at

weekly attacks on our service personnel, 2 years ago they went from 185

to 620 now. Up substantially, unfortunately.

So the security situation under the George Bush plan for security in

Iraq, all of the indicators are going in the wrong direction. The

status quo is not adequate. We cannot just trust the President with

making decisions in Iraq.

So I want to turn now to sort of the life-style, if you call it that,

in economic conditions in Iraq. We were told, when we were briefed on

this war by Paul Wolfowitz and others of the President's men and women,

that oil would be quickly restored in Iraq and that, indeed, the Iraqis

would pay for this war by themselves. In fact, the production of oil

today has still not reached prewar levels under that tyrannical,

abysmal dictator Saddam Hussein. We still have not achieved oil and gas

production records on one of the largest pools of oil on Earth; they

are still at 2.18 million barrels compared to 2.5 in the prewar level.

We still are not back up to those levels. And we are paying hundreds of

billions of dollars today for Iraq.

In electricity we, at best, are back to prewar levels after 3 years

and untold tens of millions of dollars squandered, American taxpayer

dollars. And, in fact, in Baghdad today I read they are having a heat

wave in Baghdad and they still only have 3 to 4 hours a day of

electricity. You can imagine, after 3 years of sitting under a foreign

army's occupation, with 3 hours of electricity for your air

conditioner. I read these Iraqis said that, We basically sit and look

at each other. I read this comment by a middle-class Iraqi who said, We

are going crazy doing that. And I can understand that.

The economic condition is not making substantial improvement in Iraq

under the harsh realities.

So now we turn to the political situation and ask ourselves if the

George Bush plan is adequate on Iraq. And, yes, we have had elections

and we were all thrilled by elections. All of us would like to see a

democratic Iraq. But there is a very harsh reality that we think

demands a change of plans in Iraq.

That is, until the Shiia community and the Sunni community and the

Kurd community can strike the hard bargains it takes to make a

democracy in Iraq, and particularly over access to the oil resource,

which they still have not done after 3 years. It doesn't matter what an

outside force will do. The current plan is not a plan for success.

Frankly, our continued presence in Iraq is now acting as a security

blanket to allow the politicians in Iraq to refuse to move forward with

hard compromises about oil revenues, which is dooming our military to

be there for decades. That is why we need to send a message to the

Iraqi politicians that we are not going to be there for decades and

they must make the compromises necessary about oil revenues, because

they are shortly going to have responsibility for their own country.

I am not the only one to think that. There are some people with some

skin in this fight besides Americans, and that is the Iraqis. We went

there to help the Iraqis. It was based on false information and deceit,

but, nonetheless, Americans had I think the right intentions. So I

think it pays some heed to see what the Iraqis think about this.

What the Iraqis think about this, when a poll was done January 31,

2006, by the World Public Opinion Poll, and that is not a group that

has any particular dog in this fight, they went out and asked the Iraqi

people, do you approve the government endorsing a timeline for U.S.

withdrawal?

These are the people whose lives are most dependent on obtaining a

secure, safe Iraq. They are not sitting thousands of miles away like we

are, like the President is. They are sitting in these rooms with no

electricity and 120 degrees temperature and bombs going off next door

where they can't send their kids out to play. They may be considered

perhaps the experts on this issue. What do the Iraqis say about that

issue?

What they say is 87 percent of Iraqis would approve of the government

endorsing a timeline for U.S. redeployment. That is something we ought

to think about. I think there is a reason for that. I think there is a

reason that 87 percent of the Iraqis who are living in such squalor and

danger today believe that it makes sense for us to tell Iraqis that the

time is shortly coming where the country will be theirs. I think the

reason is they recognize that their politicians aren't going to get

around to disposing of really coming up with an agreement on oil

reserves until they know that the day is coming that the United States

security blanket will be removed. The Iraqis have figured this out. We

should figure it out.

So we are here today saying it is not enough just to trust President

Bush with decisions in Iraq. Security is not getting better, the

economy is not getting better, the political situation still really has

not come to terms with the necessary compromise, and it is time for us

to send a message to the Iraqi government that they need to get serious

about resolving issues and redeploying our troops.

This is a strategy for success. The Bush plan is a strategy for long-

term failure. It is time that we come to terms, take off the rose-

colored glasses and make hard decisions.

I want to thank Mr. Larson for allowing me to participate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to pose this question here about who

is driving the bus when it comes to Iraq policy. And this is an

important question I know all of us feel. Yesterday, two of our finest

from the State of Washington were killed in Iraq, young men.

The day before that, a young man from Port Orchard, Washington, who

had been fighting for life for 3 months died in one of our hospitals in

Texas. We need somebody to drive the bus of Iraqi policy that is

trustworthy, accurate, and has a full understanding of what is going on

in Iraq.

And when you ask yourself, does the President meet those criteria for

that policy, does his policy meet that criteria; was he right on

weapons of mass destruction? No. Was he right on association with 9/11?

No. Was he right on the number of troops we needed? No.

Was he right on flac jackets for the troops? No. Was he right on

armored Humvees? No. Is he right on the issue of who is actually doing

the fighting now? He still wants to make it sound like it is just part

of an international conspiracy, not a sectarian conflict that is going

on when Shiites and Sunnis are killing themselves in the streets? No.

He still is wrong about the basic nature of the conflict, and yet

some people in Congress want to let him just drive the bus after he has

crashed it 52 different times, and we have lost over 2,500 of our

finest as a result.

It is time for someone else to start driving the bus, and that is

Congress; to start asking these hard questions and demand a different

strategy