Thank you, I want to salute you for organizing this

Special Order tonight on the very day where this new Congress rose to

its constitutional duty and stood up for the American people who made a

watershed historic change last November in terms of expecting us as

Members of Congress to lead the way to a new direction in Iraq. The

vote again today followed a succession which all of us here as new

Members have been part of. I think it is fitting that we are here to

discuss that change as the people who really made a difference in terms

of changing control of this body.

The vote today was, as members of the Armed Services Committee and

Ms.

Shea-Porter knows this, was all about what has happened to the military

readiness of this country.

Chairman Skelton is a passionate believer that this war has almost

destroyed the ground forces of this country, the Army and the Marines.

This was driven home to me during the July 4 recess. A young man, Army-

enlist soldier, came to our district office. In one hand, he had his

orders for redeployment, his fourth redeployment to Iraq. He had been

to Iraq for two 1-year stints, and an additional stint of 7 months in

Afghanistan. So over 4 years, 2 year and 7 months, he has been in a

combat zone and barely been home for any rest time.

In his other hand, he had a bag filled with prescription medicine for

anti-anxiety conditions. Zoloft was one of his prescriptions, which is

a very serious medication for that type of condition. Yet we have a

situation where he is being sent for the fourth time back into a combat

zone. Luckily, our office was able to arrange for him to be seen by a

psychiatrist, and a report was prepared which showed that he had full-

blown post-traumatic stress, and we are making arrangements with the

Army to ensure that he is not sent back into that situation.

But that is the dirty little secret about this surge policy, that we

are forcing people who are not physically fit because they are not

getting adequate rest time at home and, in many cases, who are mentally

ill and being sent back into combat zone because of the taxing of our

Armed Forces. It has reached the point where they have no other choice

but to try and send people who again are well outside any normal

guidelines in terms of rest, training and equipment which the Army has

set up.

This bill today which we voted on and passed by an ever-increasing

margin with each succeeding vote here, is an attempt to say as a Nation

and as a Congress, which has the constitutional duty to raise the Armed

Forces, that we have a duty to change course in Iraq to ensure that we

have Armed Forces that are capable of addressing the real national

security interests of this country.

Certainly being in the middle of a civil war in Iraq is not

consistent with the national security interests of this country.

As Congresswoman Shea-Porter pointed out today, the front page of the

Washington Post has pointed out that al Qaeda now has reached the level

of strength that it had before the events of 9/11, that there are

training camps in Pakistan that have been allowed to flourish because

our eye was taken off the ball with the invasion of Iraq when we should

have finished the job in Afghanistan back in 2002 and 2003.

We are now in a situation, as Mr. Arcuri just said, we are, in fact,

as exposed and as vulnerable as this country was at the time of

September 11 because of the outrageous, misguided policies of this

administration.

This bill, which we voted on today, which sets out a very measured,

responsible policy that will change course in Iraq, I think answers all

the questions of the doubters and the cynics that we don't have an

answer for what happens after a change of course that occurs in Iraq.

This is not about Vietnam revisited where people are going to be

evacuated in helicopters.

This bill lays out a responsible plan for real change in Iraq that

addresses the need to approach this problem on a regional basis in the

Middle East and reintroduces a diplomatic measure that has been sorely

lacking in terms of this administration's policy over the last four-

and-a-half years.

So, again, I think as new Members who are part of the new majority

that have helped revive life in this branch of the government, which

was a near rubber stamp over the last 4 years, it is important that I

think we are here tonight to reemphasize what took place here in this

chamber and to restate our mission to keep faith with the voters that

took place last fall and make sure that we have a real change in policy

in Iraq.

I'd like to yield now to Congressman Ellison from the State of

Minnesota who's again part of this new majority here in Congress.

One day last week, this past week, in Hartford,

Connecticut, General Eric Shinseki came and spoke the to World Affairs

Council in Hartford. He, speaking of courage, was the chief of the Army

at the outset of the Iraq war, was asked the question by the Armed

Services Committee, how many forces it would take to secure Iraq after

the invasion. He said, hundreds of thousands of troops.

As we all know, what happened to him was that because the

neoconservatives to dominated the administration at the time didn't

want to hear that type of reality; instead, they were wedded to this

view, that you could win the war on the cheap.

He was bounced out of the Army, after an incredibly distinguished

career, decorated combat veteran in Vietnam, one of the people who did

an incredible amount of work to bring our Armed Forces back after the

debacle of Vietnam.

He spoke to the World Affairs Council on Monday and talked about what

happened in the wake of Vietnam in terms of our Armed Forces, that the

disillusionment and, you know, just the negative fallout that occurred

in terms of people enlisting in the Army, departing well before their

planned careers were going to actually come to fruition, caused great

damage to the Armed Forces that took decades to recover, and that we as

a Nation had finally gotten to a point where we had

not just people at the top level but also at the middle levels of the

Army who had really gotten a strong, competent force back into place.

His concern is that this war in Iraq is going to result in the same

damage as an institution to the Army and the Marine Corps.

We are seeing it in terms of people departing the service, the mid-

level officer corps. We again saw another example where the Army failed

to hit its recruiting goals last month.

This bill today that we voted on was all about trying to repair the

damage that has been done to the military readiness of this country,

and General Shinseki, who I think will go down in history as a prophet

in this country, as hopefully somebody who still has service to give to

this Nation, maybe in a new administration some time or in some other

role, is reminding us that we are at grave risk.

Again, the quality people, I know we saw it in Iraq when we went and

visited, just wonderful, wonderful people serving in uniform in Iraq,

helpful, smart, independent minded. But right now they are trapped in a

policy by the administration that is basically telling them that their

service is just being used in a way that shows no respect for their own

wonderful qualities.

It is one of the main, most important reasons that this bill today

that we voted on has got to get passed and signed into law. We have got

to keep chipping away with vote after vote over the next few weeks or

so to make sure that the gathering numbers we are picking up on these

measures are going to get us to the point where real change is going to

happen.