Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for yielding and

for his leadership. Also, I would like to thank our Speaker, our

leadership, Chairman Skelton, Chairman Lantos, Congresswoman Ileana

Ros-Lehtinen and others for really bringing this critical measure to a

vote today.

What this legislation does is really simple. It does what the Iraq

Study Group and other experts have recommended that we do. It makes a

clear state of policy that the United States does not intend to

maintain an open-ended military presence in Iraq and that we will not

exercise control over Iraqi oil, and it backs up that policy with the

power of the purse.

And the President and his administration to this date, and I mean to

this

date, have not made a clear statement of this policy. Putting Congress

on record with this clear statement helps take the target off our

troops' backs; it supports our goals of handing over responsibility for

security and public safety to Iraqi forces.

Mr. Speaker, the perception that the United States plans to maintain

a permanent military presence in Iraq strengthens the insurgency and

fuels the violence against our troops. That is why experts ranging from

former adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority Larry Diamond to

the Iraq Study Group have called on the President to make a clear

statement of policy that the United States does not intend to maintain

permanent military bases or an open-ended military presence in Iraq.

Unfortunately, the administration has refused to do that. In fact,

there are conflicting accounts as to who will decide if we stay in Iraq

permanently. When the President was asked that question at a press

conference last October he said: ``Any decisions on permanency in Iraq

will be made by the Iraqi Government.'' But when Secretary Gates was

asked is our presence left up to the Iraqis, or do we make the decision

in testimony before the Senate this February, Secretary Gates said, we

will make this decision.

More recently the administration has further muddied the waters by

saying that they envision a United States military presence in Iraq

similar to that we have in South Korea where American troops have been

stationed for more than 50 years and won't be leaving anytime soon.

We must soundly reject the vision of an open-ended occupation as bad

policy which undermines the safety of our troops, and we must recognize

it for what it is: Another recruiting posture for terrorists.

To those who raise objections or want to suggest this is only a

symbolic measure, or raise semantic questions about what a permanent

base is, let me say this: This is a serious issue, and I think we

should all recognize how much is at stake.

The question is simple: Do we support an endless occupation, or do we

oppose it? We may disagree on many things about Iraq, but I hope we can

agree that an endless occupation is not the answer. Let's make that

commitment today. Let's put the so-called Korea model to bed, and let's

tell our young men and women that when they come home, they will all

come home. Let's pass this legislation, and I want to thank

Congresswomen Woolsey and Waters, and Congressmen Price and Allen for

their support.