I want to thank the gentleman for yielding and to

acknowledge the exceptional leadership of my colleagues from

California, Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey,

for their leadership on this issue, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee's

authorship of this legislation. Congresswoman Barbara Lee,

Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Congressman Tom Allen, Congressman David

Price, Congresswoman Maxine Waters have all been important in the

leadership of bringing this legislation to the floor and continuing our

debate on the involvement in Iraq.

The legislation is timely and a key part of our strategy for a new

direction in Iraq. Thank you all.

I am very pleased to join our distinguished colleagues on the

minority in support of this legislation. Yes, I have had the privilege

of working with Mr. Rohrabacher, with Ranking Member Ros-Lehtinen and

others, Mr. Wolf and Mr. Smith, over the years on issues that relate to

human rights throughout the world. I respect them for their leadership

in so many arenas. It has been a privilege to work with them. I am so

glad they are supporting this legislation today.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important for us to measure any

initiative in relationship to the war in Iraq against the backdrop of

what does this do to contribute to a vision for stability in the Middle

East, whether we are talking about no permanent bases, whether we are

talking about redeploying our troops out of Iraq, a change of mission

there, to leave troops only for specific limited purposes. This is what

the generals have told us. General Odom, for one, has said any vision

for stability in the Middle East must begin with the redeployment of

troops out of Iraq. So, too, this issue today, no permanent bases.

Yes, our colleagues are correct that this has been brought before the

Congress before and has been passed into law, but the fact is that it

may not have been heard adequately by the administration and certainly

not by the people in the region.

This legislation clearly signals that the United States does not seek

a permanent military presence in Iraq. This action is necessary to

clarify confusing and contradictory statements from the administration

regarding our Nation's long-term strategic relationship with Iraq.

In its final report, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group recommended that

the United States clearly state that our Nation does not seek permanent

military bases in Iraq or to control Iraq's oil. It did so to help

shape ``a positive climate for . . . diplomatic efforts,'' which are

essential to ending the U.S. presence in Iraq and bringing greater

stability to the Middle East.

While the administration has previously indicated it would not seek

permanent bases in Iraq, recent statements raise contrary questions.

Administration officials have remarked that the President envisioned a

continued military presence in Iraq similar to our presence in Korea,

where U.S. forces have been stationed for more than 50 years.

The American people have made it clear in the election that they want

a new direction in Iraq that brings the troops home. The Iraqi people

and regional powers must also be reassured that the United States does

not seek to exploit Iraq either by building permanent military

facilities there or by exercising control over its oil. We can make

that statement by passing this legislation overwhelmingly today as part

of our strategy for a new direction in Iraq and for stability in the

Middle East.

The President's remarks in South Carolina yesterday were really

saddening. Just when you think you have seen it all, just when you

think you have heard it all, the President mentioned al Qaeda nearly

100 times to justify his course of action in Iraq. Let us remove all

doubt. This Congress, every single person here, is committed to fight

the war on terror, but let us not misrepresent what the troops in Iraq

are doing.

Everyone who examines the situation with the knowledge says we do not

belong in a civil war in Iraq. So, again, the President's statements

give great cause for grave concern. They crystallized why the Congress

must continue to pressure the administration to change course in Iraq.

Yet again, President Bush mischaracterized the facts on the ground in

Iraq and the latest intelligence on the real threat of international

terrorism.

Just yesterday news reports were that the administration plans a

continued substantial troop presence in Iraq through the summer of

2009; heaven knows, beyond then.

As the latest National Intelligence Estimate reveals, the war in Iraq

has not made America safer or turned the tide against terrorism. In

fact, while we have been tied down in Iraq, al Qaeda has been

regenerated, has regenerated its ability to attack the United States

while enjoying safe haven in vital areas of our ally in the war on

terrorism, Pakistan.

The President's Iraq policy is unacceptable to the American people,

and to Democrats in Congress, because it has allowed al Qaeda to regain

its footing, reinforce its numbers, and refocus on another spectacular

and deadly attack on the United States. That is why we must change

direction in Iraq and do it now before it is too late.

America cannot afford another 2 years of war in Iraq. We have already

lost more than 3,600 brave Americans to this bloody conflict. There can

be no discussion of the situation in Iraq without pausing to remember

and acknowledge the sacrifice, the courage and the patriotism of our

men and

women in uniform and their families who have sacrificed so much for our

country. We thank them, we honor them, and we think they deserve better

than no plan for a redeployment of troops out of Iraq.

We have lost 4 years that could have been spent bolstering Homeland

Security, strengthening counterterrorism efforts, and focusing all of

the resources at our disposal on combating the terrorist threat.

Today's vote can again make clear to the President, and to the

administration, to the American people, to the people in the Middle

East, to the people in Iraq that the American people are opposed to a

permanent military presence in Iraq.

The American people are demanding a new direction. The Democratic

Congress will go on record every day, if necessary, to register a

judgment in opposition to the course of action that the President is

taking in Iraq. The Democratic Congress will go on record every day, if

necessary, to fight for a redeployment of our forces as a central

element of a new direction strategy for Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to vote in overwhelming numbers for this

important legislation.

Again, I thank our colleagues, Congresswoman Barbara Lee,

Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Congressman Tom Allen, Congresswoman Maxine

Waters, and Congressman David Price and all the others who played such

an important role in bringing this legislation to the floor.