Mr. Speaker, China is facing growing criticism for its

record on human rights. It has been condemned for its recent crackdown

on Tibet, its oppression of dissidents at home, and its support for the

regime in Sudan that is responsible for the genocide in Darfur.

Russia is another country that has received justifiable criticism for

cracking down on freedom. President Putin has rolled back many of the

democratic gains Russia made after the Cold War. And the recent

elections in Russia were a sham, clearly rigged to favor Putin's

candidate.

Because of all of this, you would think that the people of the world

would have a much higher opinion of the United States, the world's

greatest democracy, than they would have of anti-democratic China and

Russia. But that just isn't the case. Incredibly, according to the most

recent annual survey of international attitudes, America is viewed more

negatively around the world than China and Russia.

The Study of World Opinion was conducted by the BBC World Survey.

According to the BBC, America's image abroad plummeted after our

invasion of Iraq in the year 2003, and continued to decline in the

following years.

The latest survey, which was released on April 1, however, has shown

some good news. America's image is a little better than it was last

year. But it is not because the world has suddenly changed its opinion

about the Bush administration and its policies in Iraq.

The director of the survey was quoted as saying, ``It may be that, as

the U.S. approaches a new presidential election, views of the U.S. are

being mitigated by hope that a new administration will move away from

foreign policies that have been so unpopular in the world.''

Mr. Speaker, what the world thinks of America matters. And it is not

just because we want to win popularity contests. It is far more serious

than that. Our ability to lead the world is badly damaged when our

reputation is in tatters. We cannot lead the world in the fight against

terrorism when so many people in the world, even our best friends,

believe that we are a threat to peace ourselves. We cannot lead the

world in the fight against the many other global problems, including

poverty, disease, climate change, and the lack of educational

opportunity when we have lost our moral authority and credibility.

When you go to war under false pretenses, devastate a nation that

never attacked you, and condone torture, you don't make America

stronger, you make America weaker, because you undermine values that

are the real source of our strength. America's great values are

democracy, the rule of law, peace, and compassion for the people of the

world. Our occupation of Iraq has trampled on all of these values. The

veto of Congress' effort to outlaw waterboarding is just the latest

example of what I am talking about.

And what was gained by trashing our values? Nothing. A report written

by the National Defense University, the Pentagon's premier military

educational institute, called our occupation of Iraq a major debacle.

Mr. Speaker, 92 Members of the House have written to the President to

tell him that we will fully fund the responsible redeployment of our

troops out of Iraq, but we will not approve another penny to support

the disastrous policy of open-ended occupation.

After more than 5 years of occupation, it is time for us to redeem

America's reputation, restore our values, rebuild Iraq, and lead the

world in the fight for peace once again.