Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our Nation's spending

priorities, President Bush and his administration do not know which way

is up. Already the President has given Congress a 2006 budget that is

all but certain to explode in the year 2009; a ticking time bomb set to

detonate after President Bush leaves office. In a move that should

surprise no one, this budget conspicuously omits funding for any and

all military operations and reconstruction efforts in Iraq, leaving the

funding to a supplemental spending bill that does not count against the

President's deficit estimates.

These funds are not insignificant. To date Congress has funded a $154

billion military operations and reconstruction budget in Iraq, and the

Democratic staff on the House Committee on the Budget has estimated

that the war in Iraq could cost the United States as much as $650

billion by the year 2015. Adjusted for inflation, this amount rivals

the combined costs of the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the first

Gulf War; the combined costs.

Let me be clear that my opposition to the President's reckless fiscal

policies is not a condemnation of the service men and women who so

bravely serve our country. I want everyone to know that I oppose the

war, not the warriors. Hundred of thousands of selfless troops were

uprooted from their families and their everyday lives to answer the

call of duty for their country, and we owe them our absolute gratitude.

Sadly, so far, 1,500 of these brave men and women will not return home

alive. Another 11,000 will return home forever wounded as a result of

injuries sustained in battle. These are the casualties of this ill-

conceived war.

A lot of people talk about supporting our troops, but the call to

support our troops is yet another reason to oppose President Bush's

latest supplemental spending request. If the Bush administration really

cared about our troops, they would take all measures to get them out of

harm's way and bring them home as soon as possible. But the latest

supplemental assumes that 150,000 American soldiers will stay in Iraq

as sitting ducks for years to come. And this bill does not bring them

home. It is wholly irresponsible for the Bush administration to fund an

unending military operation without devising an exit strategy and

without even considering the possibility that the military option is

not working.

The supplemental spending bill that President Bush sent to Congress

also fails to include any type of reporting mechanism, which means that

these funds can be spent by military commanders without any accounting

of how or where that money was spent. This is a woefully irresponsible

way to spend American taxpayers' money.

This, on top of $9 billion in reconstruction funds that cannot be

accounted for by the Coalition Provisional Authority, the American

governing body that was in charge of overseeing Iraq until 2004. This,

on top of $3 billion in reconstruction funds that had to be

reprogrammed for military operations because the Bush administration

failed to account for an angry Iraqi insurgency.

What did the President think would happen when he invaded a country

that never posed a threat to the United States and never wanted us

there in the first place?

Instead of continuing down our current path, I believe we must pursue

a national security strategy that I call SMART security, which is a

sensible, multilateral American response to terrorism for the 21st

century. I have also introduced legislation, H. Con. Res. 35, that

would help us pursue a smarter strategy for rebuilding Iraq. Twenty-

seven of my House colleagues have joined me in offering this important

legislation.

Instead of financing billions of more dollars to continue a failed

military occupation, under my plan, the United States would help secure

Iraq by rebuilding schools so that children can learn, constructing new

water processing plants so that this desert country does not face water

shortages, and building new roads so that citizens can travel from one

city to another.

Our assistance should not end there. If we want to be truly smart

about how we rebuild Iraq, we also need to bring NGOs and humanitarian

agencies into the country to help create a robust civil society and

ensure that Iraq's economic infrastructure becomes fully viable.

It is time for us to support the Iraqi people by giving them the

resources they need, and it is time to support our own troops by

bringing them home.