Mr. Speaker, let me first of all associate

myself with the very thoughtful message of the gentleman from Missouri

(Mr. Skelton) in terms of his very plain-talking message about our

military.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Skelton) and I had the pleasure of

visiting a number of them most recently in Iraq and I think a strong

debate on this question will be important. Many people believe that

those of us who have a difference of opinion for or against the war or

for or against the approach that the war took, do not have a total

agreement on the necessity of strengthening the young men and women who

are in our Armed

Forces. So I look forward to debating this very thoughtful presentation

and associate myself with his remarks and the legislative initiatives;

and I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Skelton) for his

leadership.

Let me say that I also associate myself with the gentleman's remarks

as it relates to the toughness, as it relates to the battle of our

Reserve troops and others who have offered their service for a number

of years and have been called to duty; and many of them are not able to

determine whether they will be in for 6 months or for a year or 18

months or 2 years.

We certainly have the protection of their jobs, but in many instances

we are still having disagreements or having to advocate for our

reservists to their various employers, some of whom are concerned or

unsteady about keeping the reservists' jobs for them and, therefore,

certainly undermining the family unit and the ability of that reservist

to provide income and support for his or her family.

I happen to be a supporter of the legislation that would allow

reservists to retire at 55, just as we allow the active military to

retire at 55. It seems unlikely that we would lengthen the time of

service for reservists who are apt to be called into battle at any

moment. We have lost lives of those who are reservists in Iraq. The

numbers are mounting, and they are on the front line.

When I went to Iraq, there were many who were skilled in many other

aspects other than combat or police work; and lo and behold, they were

being used for service that they were not trained for. So I associate

myself with those remarks and certainly support the gentleman from

California (Mr. Filner) for his efforts in support of our veterans,

because we have long been overdue in the full support of our veterans

who are willing to give their full measure. And as they are able to

come back to our communities, the very fact that they are willing to

give the ultimate sacrifice, we should make good on our promise, which

is to continue to provide them with benefits on a continuous basis.

Let me also add my congratulations to the veterans hospital that is

in my district. We just added the Fischer House. Congratulations to the

Fischer family and thank them for their support and all the leaders in

Texas that helped bring about this new Fischer House in one of the

largest veterans hospitals in our State. And that is, of course, a

facility for the families who have come for the long-term wounded to be

able to stay at a place of comfort without, if you will, providing an

unnecessary financial burden when they are already suffering from the

ills of their loved one, whether they are wounded by way of their

service in Iraq or suffering with other conditions.

So I am very grateful to our community leaders who helped bring the

Fischer House about in my congressional district and commit myself to

continue to work with them.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we bring sunlight where

sunlight is needed, and today and in the weeks and months to come I am

going to take my place on this floor and remind this Congress of its

constitutional responsibility. And, in fact, I am going to take off and

challenge anyone, first, take off any discussion of a partisan hat and

challenge anyone that wishes to make this a partisan issue each step of

the way, because I believe that this is so devastating and so much a

challenge to the constitutional integrity of this Nation.

And, more importantly, in this Congress I believe that we must shed

ourselves and step away from anyone declaring this to be partisan or

anyone suggesting it is partisan, because once you begin the partisan

debate, I know what happens: You immediately cease any sort of true

effort for the Speaker of this House to address the responsibilities of

this Congress, and that is to thoroughly investigate Dr. David Kay's

report that we have heard over the last few days and that of the

Carnegie Institute regarding weapons of mass destruction.

Let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that I intend to call for full

congressional hearings, public hearings, not just in the Permanent

Select Committee on Intelligence, the Select Committee on Homeland

Security, and the Committee on the Judiciary, to ensure that we review

the questions that David Kay has raised the lack of evidence and

intelligence for weapons of mass destruction and the representation, as

I close, Mr. Speaker, to the Congress and the American people by this

administration that we must go to war on that basis.

Full congressional hearings, no independent commission, full

congressional hearings.