Mr. Speaker, as Congress prepares to debate another $80

billion war supplemental next week, I call on my Republican colleagues

to join Democrats in including amendments that would finally begin to

hold the Bush administration accountable for the billions of dollars of

taxpayers' money being sent to Iraq. The $81 billion the administration

is now asking for comes on top of an additional $200 billion already

spent in Iraq since the beginning of the war 2 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, it was not supposed to be this way. The Bush

administration never leveled with the American people about the type of

sacrifices they would have to make in order to fight this war. You will

remember that, before the war, President Bush and his war cabinet said

the sacrifices would be minimal. In fact, the Bush administration told

this very House that Iraq could pay for its own reconstruction.

Two years ago this month, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and his Deputy

Secretary Wolfowitz testified before the House Committee on

Appropriations on the minimal American funds that would be needed to

reconstruct Iraq. Secretary Rumsfeld told the Committee on

Appropriations, and I quote,

Mr. Speaker, the Bush administration either deceived this Congress

and the American people or woefully underestimated the cost of the Iraq

war. Either way, Congress should hold them accountable for their

mistakes, and that simply is not happening. Congress should also be

demanding that Secretary Rumsfeld explain where the $200 billion

already appropriated has been spent.

Unfortunately, Republicans have abdicated their oversight

responsibility and are giving the Bush administration a free ride on

the enormous miscalculations we have all witnessed in the Iraq war.

Mr. Speaker, during World War II, then Senator Harry Truman created a

war investigating committee charged with exposing any fraud or

mismanagement in our Nation's war efforts in both the Pacific and the

Atlantic. Truman was a Democratic Senator serving in a Democratic

Senate majority overseeing the Democratic administration of President

Franklin Roosevelt. Truman never worried about the fact he was

investigating a president from his own party. He refused to allow

politics to get in the way of good government. And, as a result, his

investigation saved the American taxpayer more than $15 million.

Now, that is a lot of money in 1940, but it is also a lot of money

today. I wonder just how much more money we could save the American

taxpayers if congressional Republicans took their oversight

responsibility for the war seriously?

One Republican, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. Leach), sees the real

need for a committee like the one Senator Truman created more than 60

years ago. He and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Tierney)

introduced House Resolution 116, which creates a select committee to

investigate both the awarding and carrying out of contracts in our

continued war efforts in Iraq.

For more than a year, I have been strongly advocating for the

creation of such an investigative committee, and today, I also became a

cosponsor of this legislation that I hope we can include in the Iraq

supplemental next week.

Mr. Speaker, every Member of Congress should want to vote for this

legislation. After all, one of our main functions in the legislative

branch is to

oversee exactly where the executive branch is spending funds we

appropriate. As Senator Truman demonstrated during World War II, this

has absolutely nothing to do with party politics. Instead, it has

everything to do with ensuring that the administration is not wasting

the American taxpayers' money.

I still cannot understand why congressional Republicans, with the one

exception of the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. Leach), are so afraid of

overseeing the administration's funding of the war in Iraq. I am

hopeful that Republicans will finally remember why they were sent to

Washington and join us in creating this investigative committee. It is

high time we look at the potential for war profiteering and abuse of

these contracts and the money we are spending in Iraq.

We need to have oversight. We need to have accountability. It does

not matter that there happens to be a war. It does not matter that it

happens that we have a Republican president and a Republican Congress.

We should all join together on a bipartisan basis to ensure there is

accountability for this money before we proceed in spending any more of

it.