Mr. President, 4 years ago today, as Senator Menendez

said, the President landed on an aircraft carrier, amid a flurry of

pomp and circumstance, and declared, ``Mission accomplished.''

Since that day, much has happened. Since that day, 3,000 brave

American soldiers and marines have died in Iraq. This war has gone on,

since that day, longer than World War II. Since that day, the United

Nations has estimated that 35,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed.

Since that day, U.S. taxpayers have spent $450 billion on the war in

Iraq.

To get an understanding of what $450 billion is, if we spent $500

every second of every minute of every hour of every day, it would take

29 years to spend the $450 billion we have spent in Iraq.

Now, 4 years later, our troops in Iraq are stuck in the middle of a

civil war. Too many of our brave soldiers do not have the body armor

they need, in spite of the imploring of so many of us to the

administration to do what they need to do to protect our soldiers. Now

thousands of Guard men and women face early and extended redeployment.

Four years later, the will of the people resonates in townhalls and

in

churches, in back yards and in living rooms across this country. Their

message is clear: Mr. President, redeploy our troops out of Iraq.

Up to now, however, the President has refused to hear the calls of

millions of Americans. He has refused to listen to voters last fall who

demanded a different course in Iraq. He has refused to listen to the

Iraq Study Group, which recommended the redeployment of our troops out

of Iraq. He has refused to listen to his own generals who have implored

him, in many cases, to disengage from this civil war. He has refused to

listen to Congress.

The supplemental on its way to the White House echoes what many of us

in Congress and military families across this great country have been

saying: We need a new direction for Iraq.

We take a backseat to no one in supporting the brave men and women

fighting in Iraq. That is why so many of us have pushed this

administration, pushed the civilian leadership in the Pentagon and in

the White House to equip our soldiers with proper body armor.

We take a backseat to no one in supporting the families of our

soldiers overseas. That is why so many of us in this Chamber have

pushed to help these support groups that have formed all over the

country for soldiers and helping them reintegrate back into their jobs,

back with their families and their society when they return home from

Iraq.

But more of the same is not a plan for our troops and will not end

the war in Iraq. This war has made our country and our world less safe.

Congress will continue to fight for our Nation's military by working to

see that they have the resources and the support they need and the

leadership they deserve.

This legislation fully funds and supports our troops, while

establishing conditions that will bring our troops home. It provides

desperately needed funding to the Veterans' Administration, something

this administration and previous Republican Congresses have woefully

underfunded. It provides desperately needed funding to the Veterans'

Administration to help care for the hundreds of thousands of new

veterans created by this war.

If the President will not take responsibility for his failures in his

conduct of this war, then Congress will. If the President will not lead

our troops home, then Congress will. We owe it to our soldiers, to our

sailors, to our airmen, airwomen, and to our marines, and we owe it to

their families.

Instead of threatening a veto, the President should listen to the

military leaders, listen to the American people, and work with Congress

to change the course in Iraq.

Vetoing this legislation would deny funding our military and our

veterans desperately need: $99 billion in emergency Department of

Defense spending, more than the President's budget; $3 billion for Mine

Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles; $4.8 billion in military

construction for BRAC, the Base Closing Commission; and the VA, which

has been underfunded by $2 billion in the President's budget, under

this bill would get $1.7 billion immediately, more than the President's

VA proposal, and will do better in the next budget. It includes $100

million for VA mental health services.

It is absolutely outrageous that this Congress--the House and

Senate--and this President send our men and women off to war, not

equipping them with the right body armor, not giving them the Mine

Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles we know how to build in this

country, and then when they return home, not giving tens of thousands

of soldiers and marines the health care they deserve.

In addition to what we do to restore that spending and take care of

our veterans when they return home, this emergency legislation has over

$1 billion for Katrina relief, $13 million for mine safety because of

the increase in deaths in mines in places such as Pennsylvania and West

Virginia, $625 million for the pandemic flu response, something we

absolutely need to be prepared for, and $400 million for energy

assistance for the low-income elderly.

Please, Mr. President, before you decide to veto this bill, read this

legislation. Don't turn your back on millions of Americans, don't turn

your back on your military advisers and the military experts, don't

turn your back on our soldiers. Sign this legislation.