

week's bloodshed clarified anything, it is that the battle of Baghdad is increasingly a battle against al Qaeda. Whether we like it or not, al Qaeda views the Iraqi capital as a central front of its war against us."

Finally in that article, Mr. Speaker, Senator LIEBERMAN said, "In the two months since Petraeus took command, the United States and its Iraqi allies have made encouraging progress on two problems that once seemed intractable: tamping down the Shiite-led sectarian violence that paralyzed Baghdad until recently and consolidating support from Iraqi Sunnis, particularly in Anbar, a province dismissed just a few months ago as hopelessly mired in insurgency."

So, Mr. Speaker, where do we go from here? Well, I think that it is time for the majority party to regroup, to reassess, to appreciate that what they have done is spent four months on a policy that is candidly shameful; that brings about a discredit and a disservice to our troops; that sends the wrong message to our allies saying that you cannot trust the United States of America; and certainly sends the wrong message to our enemies saying that if you oppose the United States and you are in a conflict, all you have got to do is wait because the United States will not live up to its commitment.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we need to do from here, the President has vetoed this bill this evening. I would challenge the leadership in the majority party to bring the House together. I would challenge the Senate to work together in a bipartisan way and come up with a bill that the President can sign and to do so in very rapid fashion. Every day that we delay makes it more harmful for our troops, makes it so they know not whether or not they will get the resources that they need to carry on their mission, makes it less predictable, continues to erode their morale because of the comments like the ones by the Senate majority leader last week. So we must in short order come together and pass a bill that the President can sign.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of what you believe, what one believes about the nature of this battle and whether or not it is indeed the central front of the war on terror, it is incumbent that we live up to our responsibilities, to our oath as Members of the United States House of Representatives, that we live up to the responsibility and the duty that we have. That primary responsibility is to preserve and to protect and to defend the United States.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that one of the issues about preserving and protecting and defending the United States is making certain that the men and women who stand up and volunteer to protect our liberty and our freedom deserve all of our support and the resources that they require to protect themselves and to carry out their missions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the leadership of the House and the Senate to

make certain that this week we act to bring forth a bill that will pass both chambers of this Congress, and that the President can sign, that does a credit and honors our troops; that sends the correct message to our allies, and that is, that you can count on the word of the United States of America; and sends the correct message to our enemies, and that is, that if you engage the United States in military battle, that you have met an enemy that you cannot defeat.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COHEN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, it is an honor to come before the House once again, especially this evening.

As you know, the 30-Something Working Group, we come to the floor to bring forth the truth on behalf of the American people, not just Independents or not just Democrats, not just Republicans, but on behalf of the American people.

I am so glad to be joined once again by my good friend from Niles, Ohio, Mr. TIM RYAN, and I am always excited about being on the floor with him. I am excited by the fact that, Mr. Speaker, today that there was a conference report signed to support our men and women that are in harm's way in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in areas where they are staging to move into theater, one that brings about the equipment and support, going above and beyond what the President called for, but it also had benchmarks to bring about the kind of standards that the American people are crying out for.

It happened today at 3 p.m., and I am very proud of not only the Speaker but Majority Leader HARRY REID over in the Senate, Senator REID. I think it is also important for us to realize that in both chambers it passed by a bipartisan vote. I think it is also important to note that as soon as we were able to get that conference report signed, that the President, one of his first actions was to announce officially his veto of that legislation, saying tomorrow that Democrats and Republicans will come together at the White House to discuss where we can compromise.

Let me just say this before I yield to Mr. RYAN. I understand that there is a discussion that is going on about who is right and who is wrong, but I think it is very, very important to understand especially on the date that Mr. RYAN is going to address in a minute, some 4 years ago, where there was a great announcement of accomplishment and now to continue to move on under that light of saying trust me, that everything is going to be okay, I think that those days are over. I am not saying they are over. The American people are saying they are over.

One time here on the floor, Mr. RYAN went down a litany of things, and actually I was checking out some of your work on YouTube recently, and it had the one when you came and you said, forgive me for questioning what the President says or what the Republican majority at that time had to say about the fact of liberators and paying for the war and on and on and on.

It continues, but the American people are now saying, Mr. Speaker, that we understand this Commander in Chief but we need the Congress to stand up and be the Congress, asking for accountability.

So, with that, I know that we have a number of things to talk about here this evening, and we also have some fresh quotes from former brass because, of course, if you are enlisted or you are inside, you cannot speak truth to power or speak your mind. This information has just been released not only publicly but to those of us here in Congress. We want to share that with the Members.

Also, I want to add that the death toll in Iraq is 3,351; wounded in action, returned to duty is up 13,875; and wounded in action and not returning to duty is 11,215. That is the latest at 10:00 a.m. today. As you know, when we come to the floor, we give that report of that information because I think the Members need to understand that this is not a political issue. This is a serious issue that is facing the country and also facing the men and women in uniform and their families.

So I do know that the American people are, and a super majority of them are, 100 percent behind accountability and also oversight. I think it is important that we have that, and the President is asking for a blank check.

The thing that I am disappointed about is that the President had an opportunity to share something great with the country about a dialogue, but he decided to misrepresent what is in the legislation. I think that as we continue to talk about this tonight, that we continue to share with the Members, because every time we take a vote, the vote gets greater on behalf of accountability. I am hoping that we can meter up enough on both sides of the aisle to make sure that we hang in there with the men and women in harm's way and those that may be placed in harm's way and not wince to the President on some sort of floating politics that is going on right now.

I hope they have a true dialogue. I am not about the political part of this. I am about the action part of this and making sure that our men and women have what they need.

Mr. Speaker, we have done what we said we would do: make sure that they are funded; make sure that they have the equipment that they need; make sure that the men and women that went over into harm's way, that the Department of Defense regulation as it relates to the downtime that they are supposed to have with their families,

that they will have it and that if the Department of Defense was going to exit from that, then there has to be a reason why they were going to exit, for not holding their end of the deal when these men and women signed up as volunteers.

So it is very, very important that those of us here in Congress make sure that within this democracy that many of these individuals are fighting for and making sure and those before them, the veterans, making sure we can salute one flag, that we honor them through our courage and integrity when it comes down to this very issue.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to Mr. RYAN.

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Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I appreciate that, and I think you are exactly right. There was a misrepresentation of the facts of the legislation that was put forth to the White House. I think it's important for us, for us to go over in a snapshot of what the supplemental bill did that the President just vetoed.

What this bill did was increase by \$1.7 billion the amount of money that was going to defense health care for the troops. What it did was it increased veterans spending by \$1.7 billion above what the President wanted. We tried to make law the benchmarks that the President set up for progress in Iraq on January 10, his benchmarks, and he vetoed that.

Now, the President is vetoing his own statements, if that is not confusing enough. The key component of this piece of legislation is the piece that says that our troops can't leave here and go to Iraq if they don't have the proper body armor, if they don't have the proper equipment, if they don't have Humvees that are up armored, and if they don't have the amount of rest that they need. That is what the President just vetoed.

I think this is a pretty sad day in American history when you have the President of the United States trying to win a PR battle and using the troops as hostage. Those are not my words, those are the words of General Paul Eaton, who just said, after the statement, this is what he is saying on the President's veto, "This administration and the previously Republican controlled legislature have been the most caustic agents against America's Armed Forces in memory. Less than a year ago, the Republicans imposed great hardship on the Army and the Marine Corps by their failure to pass the necessary funding language. This time, the President of the United States is holding our Soldiers hostage to his ego. More than ever apparent, only the Army and the Marine Corps are at war—alone—without their President's support."

Terrorism around the globe is up 25 percent. Stop doing what you are doing to make terrorism increase by 25 percent. Enough of the scare tactics that if we don't fight them there, they are going to come here and get us. The

same scare tactics that they have been trying to employ for the past 5 years, this is the same group of people who told us, as was stated earlier, that the oil money would be used for reconstruction, it would only cost \$50 billion, and now we are upwards of some \$500 and some billion after the 2008 budget, going to be greeted as liberators. All of the statements that have been made in the past 5 years have been wrong, colossal mistakes.

The same people that said the mission was accomplished are the same people that are now telling us we don't want any timetables, we don't want any deadlines, we don't want any goals for when we maybe should possibly, at some point, get out of Iraq and redeploy out. We don't want any of that. They expect, after all these mistakes, all of these blunders, that somehow we are going to trust them.

I am sorry, but you know what? Between now and when the President decides it's time to get out, how many more soldiers are we going to lose? How many more kids are we going to go up and see at Walter Reed who have brain injuries and post-traumatic stress?

That's the difference between today and a year from now. That's the difference between a deadline and an open-ended war, kids getting killed and innocent Iraqis getting killed. You know, I think that this is the height of arrogance that this veto showed by the President.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Let me just add to what you just said. Members may be in their office watching, or walk here on the floor and say, what's Mr. RYAN and Mr. MEEK talking about, like we are independent individuals that just come to the floor just to say that we are upset.

I must say that a number of Americans live through the people they respect in government, be it Republican or Democrat. Sometimes they lead into this political process. People they get involved in government for different reasons. Some folks say I am going to latch on to this individual, or I am going to latch on to that individual. It might have been John F. Kennedy for someone else. It might have been Ronald Reagan for another lady, or whatever the case may be.

It may be Speaker of the House, who knows. But they get involved in government for whatever reason. We got involved in government because we are the same folks that went and signed up at the supervisor of elections to run for office, because we wanted to do something about what was happening here in Washington D.C. and represent the people, not just Democrats, not just Republicans, not just independents, but the people, and those that are yet unborn.

I think it's also important, when we start looking at these issues, we can just open today's Washington Post, May 1. This is May 1, and this is Tuesday. Front page, April, toll, is the

highest of 2007 for U.S. troops, 100 U.S. troops in a month.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Can I interrupt you and just make a highlight? In the President's speech today he said that the incident levels are down.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. I hear what you are saying.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I hear you too.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. What is so very important for everyone to understand here, that this is above and beyond politics right now. For the President to say, the President is making a political statement, he is making a political statement because he once said, as long as I am President, we are not going to pull back any troops from Iraq. Just because he made that statement doesn't necessarily mean that should be the case.

We live in democracy, last I checked. No one stopped me walking down the street. No one kicked in my door, because I have rights. I think it's important that the President understands that we live in a democracy. So, really, in my opinion, it's hard to talk directly to the President about something when he has made a statement, and he has said, I am going to stick by it.

This is not stick by your guns, you know, stick by whatever, however the song goes. It's not appropriate to use when you talk about the man, but it's stick by whatever statement you made. I think it's important that people understand that we are going to the table of compromise, which the President said we were going to compromise, he didn't sound like someone who really wanted to compromise in this statement at 6:10 today.

He sounded like a person saying I am going to veto this, and they can come to the hill and the bottom line is the Congress is trying to do this, this and this. That is not looking at compromise, that is looking at keeping some sort of word that he has made. If you want to talk about word, I think it's important.

The good thing I like about the 30-Something working group members is the fact that the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and past statements are so very, very important to today's reality.

The President said, in his comments, that he didn't believe the time lines, and he spoke out very forcefully against them. Yet in 1990, on June 5, then Governor Bush said about President Clinton, I think it's important for the President to lay out a timetable as to how long they will be involved and when they will be withdrawn, talking about another conflict.

It's good enough for President Clinton. It's not good enough for him. It's one thing for you, it's an old saying, it's one thing for you to ask somebody, you tell someone to do something when you are not willing to do it. I think it's important, after all of this death, after all of the conflict that is going on in Iraq, in the middle of the winter, in the

middle of the civil war, the American people are crying out. If it was political, and men and women weren't losing their lives, and Walter Reed didn't get a plane load of injured soldiers and Marines and airmen and the Coast Guard and sailors, then I would say, well, let's play the political role.

As far as I am concerned, when I talked to my friends on the Republican side of the aisle, I share with them, because I think there is some good Members that are there that want to speak their mind. When they see me in the hall or see in the cafeteria, they say, Kendrick, you know, you were on the floor the other day, you made a lot of sense.

I say, why don't you vote differently. Why don't you vote in the emergency supplemental to send the troops the money? Because the more bipartisan votes we have, the harder it will be for the President to do what they are doing.

Listen, to the Republican minority, you guys are on your way to a permanent minority in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate following the President on this issue of don't ask any questions, just give me a blank check. The American people, unelected a number of Republican Members of the House and Senate last Congress. Why? Because they were rubber stamping everything that the President of the United States wanted.

You have witnessed this. We have seen the difference. Now we have the opportunity to lead in a bipartisan way. We send a bill to the President, he says he is going to veto it because he doesn't like it, and he misrepresents what the bill does. I think it's important, as we go through this whole discourse of how we are going to carry out for the next, how we are going to carry out the mission in getting the men and women what they need, I think it's important that we have a little truth that rises up out of all of this misinformation.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I totally agree with you. I think the first step for most people who find themselves in a massive hole and going in the wrong direction, or following someone who continues to lead them down the wrong road, is to not follow that person any more.

What the Democratic Congress has provided is what the American people sent the majority of the Democrats down here for in November, and that is to take this war in another direction, take our foreign policy in another direction. That is what this supplemental bill has done. The American people wanted us to take care of the veterans, and we increased \$500 million for post-traumatic stress disorder, \$500 million additional for brain injuries, that is what the American people wanted, for us to fix the veterans's problem.

They wanted to make sure, they got tired of hearing about kids over there without body armor. So we made sure

that no kid could go over there, or soldier or adult who is going to Iraq will not be over there without the proper equipment, body armor, up-armored Humvees, the proper rest when they get back, for over a year, let them rest. We gave the American people what they wanted, and what the troops deserved.

To have that vetoed by a President who has been wrong on every single major foreign policy and domestic issue over the past 6 years doesn't make any sense to the American people, and it certainly doesn't make any sense to us. You look, and it's getting better. You hear this all the time, it's not getting better.

It's not. If it was getting better, do you think you would have this uproar from the American people? Do you think you would have all of these new Members of Congress if things were getting better?

In a report that just came out, National Counterterrorism Center, terrorist incidents in Iraq rose by 91 percent from 3,468 in 2005 to 6,630 in 2006 and getting worse. Innocent Iraqis are getting killed all the time, and they believe it's because the American soldiers are there, because the American presence is there. That is what they believe, and we are saying we need to re-deploy out of these major centers and stop policing a civil war. That is exactly what's happening.

One of the things we wanted to do in the supplemental that the President just vetoed is hold the Iraqi government accountable for training their own soldiers. You know, the President has always said, when they stand up, we stand down. Then they keep telling us that the Iraqi soldiers are standing up, but we are not standing down, which means they are not standing up.

We wanted to put benchmarks in there so that the Iraqi soldiers would have to meet them or were leaving. Now, you can't give people open-ended situations in which they can get out of. All we are trying to do is hold the Iraqi government responsible.

I don't like saying it, because I didn't support this war from the beginning. To go in there and knock everything around and then say you are not doing what you are doing, but the bottom line is, if you do not get yourself trained, if you do not, as a country, get your police force ready, and your military ready, we can't stay here forever.

□ 2000

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that is too much to ask. And the response from the President through his Secretary of State, Secretary Rice, signaled Bush's opposition to, "Any war spending bill," check this out, "that penalizes Iraq's government for failing to make progress." We are not going to punish them for failing to make progress. Are we in a therapy session here?

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You know, a mayor of a U.S. city has to carry out accountability for Federal money; State governments have to account for the dollars and the progress of programs, block grant dollars, that we send to the States. Here on U.S. soil, they have to be accountable to the Federal Government. If they are not accountable, they may very well lose, what? Federal funding.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. That is right.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. And what the President is saying, and this blank check; you know, Mr. RYAN, I really think that the President thinks that he has a rubber stamp Congress. I think that is what he is thinking, because that is what he is used to.

It is almost like having a situation if you are a small business owner and you come in and you have a shop in one county and you spend most of your time over in the other county, you come over to your other shop and you notice the way they are doing business and there aren't any accountability measures on productivity, there are no accountability measures on spending. And you are wondering why this shop, the shop in the opposite county that you are very seldom at is running on time or being cost effective, and then you come in and you say that there should be change; but then, better yet, the manager of that shop says, well, why should we change? I know we are not doing things the way you want us to do it and we know that we are spending a lot of money over here. Why should we change? Well, that is what we have right now.

The President is saying that the Iraqi elected officials and the Iraqi government don't have to be accountable and their feet should not be held to the fire. But, better yet, we have mayors, governors, State legislators, county commissioner, parish, what have you, they have to be accountable or they lose their funding or don't get their funding when you are in a war that is costing \$500 billion and counting.

When you look at these issues, Members, you can't help but say something is not right here. These are the people that are here in the United States of America, States, cities, counties that have to be accountable through Federal law and Federal appropriations. And over here, we have the Iraqi government. 3,351 of our men and women that have died, over 26-plus thousand that have been injured. And wasted money. And 100 soldiers that died last month alone. And we don't want accountable measures over here. We want to trust the administration on it, and we just want to say don't put any benchmarks there, don't even put any real goals there, don't do anything, don't ask any questions, just send us the money; you don't know what you are doing.

Well, I tell you this much. As long as this majority is here in this House of

Representatives that passed a bipartisan bill, sent it to the White House, that had accountability measures in it, my prayer tonight is going to be for those that will be there at the negotiating table there in the White House come tomorrow morning that, on both sides, that they hold the interests of the American people before you hold the interests of someone that made a promise in Iraq, in a foreign land, to say that we are going to have as much flexibility that we are going to have, and accountability measures don't need to be in place.

It couldn't come at a worse time, Mr. RYAN. The newspaper is full and the media is full of how the American people have not been told the truth. It is sickening. I feel that it is something that I didn't do in the minority. Maybe I didn't understand something in the last two Congresses that I was a part of, of watching all of this lack of information that has been given to Congress and how the administration has gotten away with this, and they have gotten away with saying, "I am sorry, that is all. What do you want from us?" We lost e-mails, CIA agents have been outed, clandestine operations abroad have been jeopardized. Men and women, there have been cover-ups. I am talking about testimony before Congress just weeks ago, things have been covered up with friendly fire of certain individuals that signed up to defend this country. Meanwhile, we are sitting here being nice guys and nice ladies and not standing and hold their feet to the fire.

This is the reason why we have a U.S. House of Representatives, the reason we have a U.S. Senate, the reason why there are three branches of government, where we don't have kingdom politics where one just says this is the way it is going to be, like it or not.

Well, I have got a message for the White House and I have also got a message from the American people. The bottom line is we live in a democracy. We would love to sit down at the table of compromise so that we can come out with a work product. But don't sit there saying what you are not going to do and what you are going to do before you sit down at the table. At least the leadership here is saying that we are going to make sure that there is accountability and that there are benchmarks there for progress, and make sure the U.S. taxpayer dollars are being sent, not just some sort of slogan of saying, well, you know, I am trying to command from over here. I mean, it didn't make sense, Mr. RYAN. But the bottom line is, the thing that is good about this whole thing is that if this was a year ago, it wouldn't even be a debate. It wouldn't even be discussed. Accountability? Oh, no. The majority would say, we wouldn't do that. And now we have the accountability, we have the strength of the majority in the Senate and the strength of the majority here in the House.

But if there was a political question, like I said before, and one would sit

back and just let it play out and say, well, one day we will get to that point. We cannot afford to get to that one day. We have to do this now. Not several months from now, now. The American people demand it, the U.S. troops deserve it, our veterans deserve it.

There are dollars in this emergency supplemental that fix Walter Reed and start to fix the veterans services in this country. There are dollars in here that help make sure that the men and women have the proper training and the equipment before they get to the field. Wow, Mr. RYAN, there is a revelation there, that we will have equipment and that we would make sure that striker forces have what they need of making sure they have a commander and a gunner and a driver, the essentials, that are trained in those categories before that striker vehicle pulls out of Camp Victory. Wow, there is something, that we are actually going to do what we said we are going to do, and we are going to take the Department of Defense's own regulations, Mr. RYAN, and put it into Federal law in this emergency supplemental; of saying that if you are going to spend these dollars, this \$124-plus billion, that you are going to be accountable in these ways, Department of Defense.

The reason why the President doesn't like this, Mr. RYAN, is the fact that it is actually doing what it said that he would do, and he doesn't want his words to actually come to fruition when it comes down to the way he described it. He came here at this podium, Mr. RYAN, we were sitting right out here. He came to that podium and said: We are going to hold the Iraqi government accountable. We are going to make sure that they train the troops. All of these things that he said, we took note as the Congress and put it into the emergency supplemental. And I think it is important that everyone understands what that is.

One other thing, Mr. RYAN. The bill provides \$21.1 billion for military health care, more than what the President requested; \$900 million of that for posttraumatic stress disorder, \$661 million to prevent health care fees increasing on our troops, \$20 million to address the problem at Walter Reed. It provides \$1.8 billion for more veterans health care, more than what the President has called for. I want to add again, \$595 million to address the backlog maintaining the VA health care facilities, \$250 million to hire additional personnel for the administration for VA health care, for the health care system, \$229 million for treatment for the growing number of Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans, \$100 million for mental health care in veterans assistance, \$83 million to speed up the processing of claims for veterans returning back from Iraq and Afghanistan. It also provides other additional above what the President calls for as it relates to supporting of the troops.

And I think it is important that people understand, \$2 billion for more stra-

tegic reserve readiness funds, which \$1 billion is for Army National Guard equipment shortfalls. This is very, very important. \$1.1 billion for more military housing and \$3 billion more for making sure that there is mine resistant ambush protection, what we call MRAPs, for troops in Iraq.

Mr. RYAN, the reason why the President is talking about additional spending, I want to make sure that every veteran in the United States of America understands that he is talking about the money that I just described and then some.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that the President is used to having bills come to his desk that he can't even wait for it to get through the door before he signs it in tax cuts for the billionaires and those super wealthy. But this time he had legislation that's before him or he had legislation before him that he vetoed it that would have helped everyday Joe and Sue that signed up to serve this country in the way that this country asked them to serve. And, doggone it, if we can't stand behind them, then something is really wrong.

And I am really glad, Mr. RYAN, that I am not just speaking on the behalf of the "if we could, we would." But I can tell you this. What the majority leader is doing when he sits down in the Senate with the President tomorrow and the Speaker of this House what she is doing when she sits down with the President of the United States tomorrow, I want them to feel that they are wearing the breastplate of righteousness to be able to go to the President and say, these are average people, they are not sons and daughters of millionaires and billionaires. And, you know something? They are going to have rights, too. They have rights. And they have the right to be represented, and they will be represented. And I am so happy that we are going toe to toe with the President of the United States, not for politics, but for the country and for the folks that their mom and dad, they may only own one pickup truck, some of them wanted to go to college but couldn't afford to go to college, some might have gone to college and went into the Marines or to the Army or to the Navy or to the Air Force or into the Coast Guard. Those that are serving in theater as officers, we owe it to them. That is the bottom line. They deserve the representation.

I know that the President is used to getting a blank check so Halliburton can spend all the money they want to spend and burn trucks and then get paid by the Federal Government. That will no longer happen, not under this watch, not as long as we have a Democratic majority in this House and a bipartisan spirit that is willing to send him the bill.

I don't want to challenge the President to veto another bill. I want to challenge the President to come to the table and sit down, and let's have a sensible conversation and let's come up with a work product that we can all

live with. It is not going to all be that he wants, it is not going to be all that we want. But doggone it, Mr. Speaker, when they rise from that table and we get the report, the rest of us, Members of Congress, the integrity of what we have sent to the White House when it comes down to accountability, when it comes down to performance, and when it comes down to holding the Iraqi government accountable and assisting our men and women that have served and those that are coming back from theater when they need veteran services, that must be there. That has to be there. And if the President doesn't allow it, then I would say our leadership should not allow him to have his way.

As far as I am concerned, it is a no-brainer; and that is the reason why the American people overwhelmingly support our position, Mr. RYAN. When I say our position, I am not saying the Democratic majority's position, I am saying the position of the bipartisan legislation that we passed through House and Senate.

I want to thank you for your patience, sir, because I thought it was very, very important that we talk a little bit about what the President did veto and what's in the legislation so that folks don't get the misrepresentation that has been given to them over the last hour or so from the White House.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. And let's be clear about this whole issue of deadlines. There was a deadline that came out of the House version, for the political junkies that are paying attention, Mr. Speaker. There was a hard deadline that came out of the House version, not in the Senate version. And the compromise that just went to the President had the goal, just the goal of maybe getting out of Iraq. No hard deadline, just the goal, because we knew that he would veto a hard deadline. And as much as we don't like it, he is the President of the United States. But there is the goal of leaving. This President, Mr. Speaker, can't even think about the goal of getting out of Iraq. He doesn't even want to talk about it.

There is no deadline in this supplemental that he just vetoed, no hard deadline at all. The language said, the goal of getting out. So let's be very, very clear.

Now, when people ask, well, why do we need to get out. People I think feel why. There's a lot of really good examples, not just from Democrats as some of our friends may like to think, but from a variety of others.

□ 2015

Here's what is happening in Iraq, as the Washington Post reported, "A department of the Iraqi Prime Minister's Office is playing a leading role," this is the Iraqi Prime Minister's Office, playing a leading role "in the arrest and removal of senior Iraqi Army and National Police Officers, some of whom

had apparently worked too aggressively to combat violent Shiite militias, according to U.S. military officials in Baghdad. Since March 1, at least 16 Army and National Police Commanders have been fired, detained or pressured to resign. At least 9 of them are Sunnis."

So now they are removing police and military people that are cracking down on the wrong, somehow the wrong group of terrorists. And some folks say this is not like Vietnam.

How about Senator HAGEL, leading Republican, conservative. I read today he had an 85 percent rating from a conservative think tank. So he is clearly a conservative Republican. He just got back from Iraq. Here's what he says in Mr. Novak's column of yesterday, or 2 days ago. "This thing is coming undone quickly, and Maliki's government is weaker by the day. The police are corrupt, top to bottom. The oil problem is a huge problem. They still can't get anything through the parliament. No hydrocarbon law, no deBaathification law, no provincial elections."

That's CHUCK HAGEL, our friend in the Senate, our colleague in the United States Senate. Republican from Nebraska; 85 percent conservative rating from a conservative group here in Washington.

We're saying that we need to change direction, Mr. Speaker. We're saying that the Iraqi government has had over 4 years to try to piece this thing together, and that we've done all that we can do. And the American people do not want to lose any more soldiers to this war. And we want a deadline. We want to get out. We want to get out with respect. We want to get out with dignity, we want to get out and protect our troops.

But it turns out that the presence of the United States in Iraq is inciting violence. We're inciting the civil war. We're the ones being attacked, as well as others around. And in April, it's been the sixth highest month of American soldiers getting killed in the entirety of the war.

Let's fix this. Let's go in a new direction. This is not time for bravado. This is not time for ego. This is time for the American people to come together and the Congress to come together, the President to recognize that this has not worked, and for us to try to re-establish some level of credibility in the world. And this President needs to listen to the will of the American people.

And I want to make one final point, because we have this tremendous debate in the country that is not always framed the right way. But I want friends who we run into in the street, and someone says I'm pro-choice and I'm pro-life, and I think we're all pro-life. But the debate has been framed as such that pro-life Americans take their role and their issues very seriously.

And I find it extremely ironic, as a pro-life Democrat who voted for the partial birth abortion bill, that this President has two vetoes. His one veto

is on stem cell research, because that's a pro-life issue. And his second veto is to continue a war in which thousands of American soldiers have been killed and injured, and in which tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens, innocent, many of them, have been killed. And by keeping this open-ended, by keeping this open-ended, we know that there will be more death and destruction.

So I find it ironic that this President has two vetoes; one pro-life, supposedly, and the other pro-war. And how they reconcile that on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, I'll have no idea. But I think it is important for us to recognize how sometimes dysfunctional the philosophy, Mr. MEEK, of this President and this administration has been.

And so, let's, on the anniversary of "Mission Accomplished," and recognizing the failures of the past, let's do what Americans do, and that's fix the problem. Americans are full of problem solvers, and that's what we do in this country. We fix things, whether it's the car or the computer, or the truck, we fix things.

And I hope that the President will find it in his heart to sit down with Speaker PELOSI, to sit down with Leader REID and the leadership from this Congress, and draw on the knowledge of IKE SKELTON, the Chair of our Armed Services Committee, who's been in this institution, I think, over 30 years. Draw on the knowledge of JACK MURTHA, who's been in this Congress almost 40 years on the Defense Appropriations Committee. And stop listening to those people who got us in this situation.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. You know, Mr. RYAN, it's interesting. You mentioned Chairman MURTHA. Chairman MURTHA was fine with the administration as long as he was voting with the administration in the minority, being the ranking member on Defense Appropriations. They didn't have a problem with him. As a matter of fact, he was held up as a hero, decorated veteran, long-standing member of the Defense Appropriations Committee in the House, ally, called to the White House for his advice.

As soon as Mr. MURTHA figured out that, not only was the intelligence that the Congress was given was inaccurate, and as soon as he figured out that we could not win "war militarily," and he went through a long assessment in figuring this out, and talking with professionals and talking with generals, talking with those that are still enlisted, going into theater, that's what you're supposed to do as an appropriator, making sure the American taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately; making sure that what they're telling you here on Capitol Hill is actually reality, is the actual reality out in the field.

A lot of folks look to the Middle East when they think of the war. Well, the

effects of the war are felt right here in this country. You go to the military bases and you talk to these families. It's hard to go to many of these military bases because you see the children, you see the husband or the wife that's left behind. You see those that have lost their loved one, or those that are now, have their loved one coming back without an arm or a leg, or mentally affected by going into theater without the necessary time back home to recover mentally and physically from being in the middle of a civil war. I think it's important for us to realize that and understand that there's great gravity on this issue.

And the President may believe, in his own mind and also within his advisors that are standing around him, that he has to stick to his guns, he has to, you know, it's a fight at the OK Corral or here in the Capitol city. It's not a fight. We're all Americans. We're all on the same side. We salute one flag.

I think it's important for us to understand that there are some folks here, some of them wear blue jeans, some of them wear, you know, shop at big box stores and small stores in the small town, some folk never walked in a mall before, and if they walked in a mall they couldn't afford many of the things that are in the mall. These are a number of our, a super majority of the folks that are represented within the Armed Services. They aren't the only ones that serve their country, but many of them are financial challenged. And their voice is just as strong as the next person, or should be.

And so when we talk about just the simple things on behalf of the men and women in uniform and making sure that we bring some sense to this, because if the President had his way, we would be there, my children's children will have an opportunity to see this war continue.

And I think it's very, very important that we talk about accountability; not talk about it, act on it. And that's what we're doing. We're acting on it.

Let's look at what the President is all concerned about. The President must determine that substantial progress, I must add, is made on security, political and reconstruction benchmarks by July, 2007. Well, the President can just say, well, you know, I think that's fine. I think we're making progress.

If the President cannot certify progress, redeployment must start by July with a goal of being completed, and it has to be certified, that if in July, certification is made, redeployment of U.S. troops may begin by August 1 of 2007, with a goal to be complete within 180 days, by March 31, 2008.

This is sending a message to the Iraqi government that they have to whip themselves in shape; they have to make sure that we train the troops. Now, this is combat, this is not cutting off training. Training will continue. The things that will take U.S. troops out of harm's way will continue.

We're patrolling the streets of Baghdad. We're patrolling the streets of Tikrit and other places. You hear reports of security forces, Iraqi security forces, it's very slim. But you hear an uptick in U.S. troops that are taking place, I mean, that are taking place right now. And so I think it's all important that we understand that accountability measures are in place.

Now, Mr. RYAN, when we talk about accountable. It's interesting. On the prescription drug plan there were benchmarks. You had to be enrolled by a certain date. And if you weren't enrolled by a certain date then there would be penalties for not enrolling by a certain date.

It's very, very important that Americans and the Members of this Congress understand that anything, to bring about progress, has to have benchmarks and goals.

To kind of just say, well, hey, here's \$1 million. Don't worry about it. We don't care if you provide what you say that you're going to provide. We don't care how you spend it. You use your own discretion. You spend it. We're not going to say anything.

Well, that's been the case for about 4 years in this Iraq war. And now we're saying that we want to march by a different drummer's beat, one of accountability, one of making sure the integrity of what we tell the American people is actually, you actually see it, you actually are able to follow through with that, what you said that you were going to do, that you actually do it, Mr. RYAN.

And the problem is that the President is finding himself having to be accountable. And I can tell you right now that the political question, it's not an issue here, because the election took place last November. The people have spoken, so we don't even need to get on that issue.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Can I share with the American people and our colleagues one more? First, I thought it was interesting, and our crack staff here, the President gave his speech in front of the Jefferson Memorial. We've got a great quote, 1789, when Jefferson wrote a letter to Madison talking about war. "We have already given one effectual check to the dog of war, by transferring the power of letting him loose from the Executive to the Legislative body, from those who are to spend to those who are to pay."

And I think it would be appropriate, if Mr. Bush is going to use President Jefferson as a backdrop, that he should recognize at least his philosophy on some of these issues.

But a quote from General John Baptiste, retired general. Today, and this is on his response to the President's veto. "The President vetoed our troops and the American people. His stubborn commitment to a failed strategy in Iraq is incomprehensible. He committed our great military to a failed strategy in violation of basic principles of war. His failure to mobilize the Na-

tion to defeat worldwide Islamic extremism is tragic."

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"We deserve more from our Commander in Chief and his administration." That is Major General John Baptiste, retired general.

It has been a pleasure being here with you today. I hope this week, with the leadership of Leader PELOSI, that we continue to stand strong behind the American people. And you can be assured, Mr. Speaker, that when Ms. PELOSI and Mr. REID are there tomorrow negotiating that they will be representing the will of the American people, the 65 percent of the American people that want a deadline to get us out.

30somethingdems@mail.house.gov for any e-mails that the Members may want to send us. The charts that we have here, some we showed tonight and some we didn't, are all on our Web site www.speaker.gov/30something. And, again, the e-mail address is 30somethingdems@mail.house.gov.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Reclaiming my time, Mr. RYAN, I thought you made some very good points when you read the comments from the general, when you talked about the Jefferson backdrop and all today.

General Petraeus, whom I know and I have seen in theater, which I have been to Iraq twice, yes, he is a man that we all feel very good about. We know that he is carrying out a mission on behalf of his country. But we should not ride on the back of his accomplishments as a general and a commander in the field to justify the policy that is being carried out by this administration.

I tell you this, Mr. RYAN, that historians, in the very near future, are going to look back at this time and are going to wonder where the leaders were when this war and this moment right now that we are speaking in was taking place. When I used to play football, we used to have a saying, "The blind leading the blind and the two shall fall in the ditch." The bottom line is if you know that the policy has been wrong, the intelligence has been inaccurate, and that everyone that has left the administration has just about written a book about when the lie was told and how they heard it first and when it was said, I think it is important that people understand and that the Members of this House understand how history will reflect on your vote and your lack of leadership or your leadership. One of the two. If you want to listen to someone else, and I talked to my friends on the minority side, the Republican side. There are some of their former colleagues right now watching us in this debate here on the floor and wishing that they could take their vote back and stand up to the administration. Maybe, just maybe, they would still be in Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I will close on this point: The bottom line is that it is time for leadership. It is time for Members on both sides of the aisle and especially on the minority side of the aisle,

the Republican side of the aisle, to go see the wizard, get some courage, and come back to this floor and back the will of the American people for accountability for our men and women in harm's way and making sure that we hold to the integrity of what the President said he would do and making sure that we hold the Iraqi government's feet to the fire as though we would hold the mayor of Youngstown, Ohio's, feet to the fire or Sioux City, Iowa. We are going to hold their feet to the fire for Federal dollars. Why can't we hold Iraqi government's feet for Federal dollars? And the President is saying don't hold their feet to the fire and don't hold my words, whatever I have said in the past, as though I meant what I said. And the bottom line is that we have a responsibility.

So as we carry out that responsibility tomorrow morning at the White House, I hope that we are at the table of compromise but also holding to the integrity of what we originally sent to the President.

There has already been compromise. The language changed from when we passed it here on the floor and it went to the conference committee. Some language was changed then because the President didn't like it, and then it came to the floor and we voted for that. And now it is to the White House, and the President says he still doesn't like it. Now we are about to sit down again with the President to talk about these issues. And then maybe, just maybe, there may be another vote here on the floor and the President may say he still doesn't like it.

So when it comes down to the speech of who is letting the troops down, I think it is going to become more and more evident to the American people and to the Congress that we have a problem on the executive branch end of not being at the table of compromise for real on behalf of our men and women in uniform. We are doing our job. Let's continue to do it.

With that, Mr. RYAN, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the leadership for allowing us to come here to address the American people in the U.S. House once again. It was a great honor.

THE BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN REFORM ACT AND PEAK OIL

THE SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COHEN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I want to spend the first few minutes this evening talking about oral arguments that were recently made before the Supreme Court. It was on the Wisconsin Right to Life, Incorporated, versus the Federal Election Commission.

Now, it is not clear from that title what we are talking about. What we are really talking about is a test of the constitutionality of a clause in the Bi-

partisan Campaign Reform Act that prohibits any issue advocacy advertising, electioneering they call it, 30 days before a primary and 60 days before a general election.

Now, in the State of Maryland in a nonpresidential year, our primary is in September, and it is, as a matter of fact, less than 60 days before the general in November. So we are prohibited from issue advocacy ads 30 days before the primary, which are added immediately to the 60 days before the general. So for 90 days, 3 months, before the election, we cannot communicate with our constituents.

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that few people are seriously considering the next election 90 days before it occurs. So for all practical purposes, we in Maryland, and many other States like us that have primaries close to the general election, are almost completely prohibited from communicating with our constituents through issue advocacy ads.

This is political speech, and what this Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act does is to deny political speech 30 days before a primary and 60 days before a general election.

I think to put this in context to see how really important this is, we need to go back to the founding of our country and to understand why our Founding Fathers came here.

Most of them came for one or both of two reasons to escape tyrannies in the country that they lived in. One of these was the tyranny of the church. In the British Isles it was the Anglican Church, and on the continent it was the Roman Church. And in most of the country there was a state church. And these state churches, the Anglican Church in England and the Roman Church on the continent, could and did oppress other religions. So our Founding Fathers came here to escape that tyranny.

They also came here to escape the tyranny of the crown. And it is incredible to us. We can't understand it because we live in a whole different culture. But almost every country from which our Founding Fathers came had a king or an emperor which claimed and was granted divine rights. What that said was that the rights came from God to the king and the king would give what rights he wished to his people. Some magnanimous rulers gave considerable rights to their people; others gave very few. So our Founding Fathers came here intent on escaping those two tyrannies.

So it is no accident that after writing the Constitution in which it was very clear that this was to be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, as Abraham Lincoln said four score and seven years later, and that the government was to reflect the wishes of the people, that the people through collective government would govern themselves. That was really quite implicit in the Constitution because article I, section 8 of the Con-

stitution gave very few rights to the Federal Government.

But the ink was hardly dry on the Constitution before they wondered if people would really understand that what they wanted was a very limited Federal Government and that they wanted most of the rights to belong to the people. So it is no accident, I think, that in that first amendment, which they wrote, that they addressed both of these tyrannies. From the very beginning, they wanted to make it crystal clear that we were to have freedom of religion, and they say it very simply, that they wanted to avoid what they came from, what they came here to escape, and that was an established religion, a religion established by the government. So they said very simply "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

I don't know why we have trouble understanding that, Mr. Speaker. It is just plain English. It has nothing to do with a wall of separation between Church and State. Indeed, our Founding Fathers were deeply religious people, and they believed that we should have religious people running our government. President Adams said that our Constitution was written for a religious people which serves the purposes of no other. So it is no surprise that in the first amendment they addressed both tyrannies actually. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." Don't establish any State religion. And, furthermore, let everybody worship freely. They said "or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

And then they addressed the tyranny of the crown. And I have here an article that was written by James Bopp, who was the primary person to argue this case before the Supreme Court. He said that the American government was to be an act of self government by the people and the first amendment was to ensure the people's participation in their own government by protecting the four indispensable democratic freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and petitioning the government. Thus the first amendment was intended to deprive the government of the power to silence criticism of official actions, which is precisely what this well-intentioned but, unfortunately, otherwise directed Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act does. It limits the criticism of the people who are making our laws, of anybody in the government or anybody running for government.

The first amendment says it this way: "or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important case before the Supreme Court. It is just not an issue of political speech, which, by the way, was the speech that our Founding Fathers most wanted to protect. And how ironic that a law that