Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, this is Health Care Uninsured Awareness Week. The number of Americans without health insurance has grown about 5 million since President Bush took office. The health care crisis is America's single largest domestic issue, but the President has offered Band-Aids to cover his lack of leadership. And the people have noticed. Nine out of ten Americans told a recent CBS/New York Times poll that the American health care system needs to be completely rebuilt.

Today, the number of Americans without any health insurance surpasses the combined population of 24 U.S. States: Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. That is the population without health insurance.

But the crisis is even worse than that. Millions of Americans are underinsured, and millions more can't afford the copay, or have to fight constant battles with the big drug companies and the HMOs.

In Seattle, my congressional district, here is what one constituent wrote to Health Care for All Washington, one of the organizations I work closely with:

''My dad has prostate cancer and has taken a turn for the worse. We had to postpone a quarterly injection of his drug because we are having trouble with the health insurance over the cost of the drug. It has been extremely frustrating as the insurance company has the drug in the wrong category. They sent us a letter admitting as much, but every 3 months we have to fight with them again, anywhere from $180 to $1,800. Anyway, since we postponed it, my dad has suffered.''

Does that sound familiar?

The pain inflicted by the health care crisis is hurting families across the United States. According to the Census Bureau, almost one-third of Latinos are uninsured, one-fifth of African Americans, 15 percent of children, 18 percent of full-time employees, and 11 percent of middle-class families.

In other words, only the rich can afford to live without risk. Only the rich are immune, because they have been coddled by the Republican-imposed income tax shelters that can pay for health care. Every other American is one layoff, one major accident, one major illness or divorce away from being uninsured and facing financial ruin.

Since the President took office, health care premiums have risen 87 percent. Have your wages gone up that much?

Here is another personal story from a letter: ''I have always worked and I have never taken welfare or asked for help from anyone. Last month, I was diagnosed with follicular lymphoma. There is no cure for this slow-moving cancer. I will not be able to buy health insurance now because I have a preexisting condition. Even if I can find it somewhere, I would not be able to afford the big premiums. The only solution I can come up with is to leave America and move to another nation where I can get health care coverage.''

When American citizens consider leaving the country as the only viable option, that is not a solution, that is an indictment of a failure to act. The only solution to America's health care crisis is a single payer, universal health care system. We have tried everything else except the right idea.

Under H.R. 1200, my bill, every American would be guaranteed a package of benefits. States would administer their own programs, with decisions made closest to the patient. The health care system today is all about profits, not patients. My bill would put patients back in charge. It would provide predictable and lower cost for American businesses, and everyone would be covered.

The special interests have run the health care system into the ground, and millions of Americans have been ground into financial ruin as a result. The single most common cause for going into bankruptcy in this country is health care costs.

America stands virtually alone in the industrialized world in not caring for its citizens, and being a loner is insensitive, incomprehensible, and intolerable. If all we do is read these poignant stories and ring our hands, we will turned our backs on the people who elected us to serve them by leading. It is time to pass universal health care. We can do it, but it will take some leadership in the White House. Unfortunately, we may have to wait until 2009 to get a President who understands that all Americans should be protected with health insurance.

THE WAR IN IRAQ

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

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to come before my colleagues and those that might be looking in to speak about the war in Iraq.

We have heard colleagues speak about the issue tonight in poignant and, no doubt, sincere terms. Mostly, the words of my Democrat colleagues register their objection to the ongoing war in Iraq, and that is expected, as Democrats will prepare to bring to the floor of the House of Representatives by this weekend a war spending bill that will include timetables for withdrawal that will add unconstitutional provisions which will necessitate the beginning of troop withdrawals by July 2007, with the goal of ending U.S. combat operations no later than March of 2008.

I want to leave for a little later, Mr. Speaker, the discussion of whether or not Congress has the constitutional authority that will be contemplated in this legislation, but for now I want to speak specifically to the state of the war. And I want to say, as President Bush said yesterday in the Oval Office, this is a tough time in Iraq.

In my role as the ranking Republican member of the Middle East Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee here in the House of Representatives, I am regularly and routinely briefed both about our surge strategy, the efforts of U.S. and coalition and Iraqi forces on the ground, and of course regularly briefed on the efforts of insurgents and al Qaeda and those attempting to foment sectarian violence and to generate a civil war in Iraq. It is a tough time in Iraq.

This week, we will hear from our commander in Baghdad. General David Petraeus is on Capitol Hill as we speak, preparing to meet tomorrow with Members of the United States House of Representatives to present his report on the progress of the surge. And that is specifically what I want to speak about tonight, because, Mr. Speaker, I suspect my colleagues will hear tomorrow what I heard from General David Petraeus in Baghdad just 3 weeks ago when I traveled with colleagues in the House and Senate to tour literally the streets of Baghdad and to tour our progress in Ramadi and in al-Anbar province.

I believe what General Petraeus will tell our colleagues on Capitol Hill tomorrow is that despite a recent wave of insurgent and horrific bombings, this war is not lost. In fact, because of the President's surge and the brave and courageous conduct of American soldiers on the ground and brave Iraqis on the ground, we are making modest progress in Iraq in the early months of this surge.

But, as General Petraeus will say, while Congress will this week contemplate embracing a resolution that will be built upon the predicate that the war is lost, in fact there is evidence that this new surge strategy both in Baghdad and in the al-Anbar province are beginning to have a good effect.

In Baghdad, for instance, as I will chronicle tonight, despite recent and horrific bombings, sectarian violence is down significantly in the past 2 months. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the deployment of more than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating centers throughout the city. And now, perhaps most compellingly, in the al-Anbar province in Ramadi, more than 20 of the Sunni sheik leaders have come together to form what they call the Iraq Awakening Movement. For the first time ever, Sunni leadership in the al-Anbar province are standing with the American soldier and with the government of Nouri al-Maliki.

Again, let me say, this is a tough time in Iraq. But we are in the midst of

a strong backlash and counterattacks by insurgency in al Qaeda. We are beginning to see the seedlings of hope in that war-torn country. I truly believe we are making progress precisely because of the President's surge strategy.

This war is not lost. And before I close tonight, I will reflect on my heartfelt sentiment that I believe the American people know that victory is our only option in Iraq, and I will urge this Congress to give General Petraeus not only a willing ear tomorrow but also the time, the resources, and the authority under his Commander in Chief to secure a victory for freedom in Iraq.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the skepticism of my colleagues on this point and perhaps even the skepticism of some who would be looking in tonight. So let me stick tonight not so much with rhetoric or semantics, but let's just talk about the facts on the ground in Baghdad. Because it seems to me just, not as a Congressman, but as an American, that most of the facts that I get in the popular debate in America in the mainstream media have to do with the horrific counterattacks that insurgents and al Qaeda are conducting in response to the surge.

□ 2030

But I want to focus tonight, in the time that I have been allotted, on the products of the surge, both militarily, both with regard to security in Baghdad and in Ramadi, where I visited just 3 short weeks ago, and also, in the political process which we all know ultimately holds the solution to our impasse in Iraq.

Let me begin by saying, first and foremost, despite the difficulty of our challenge in Iraq, we are seeing positive indicators under the President's new strategy that we hope will turn into positive trends.

General Petraeus has been carrying out this new strategy now for just over 2 months. He will not have the full complement of U.S. forces and reinforcements on the ground in Baghdad for several months yet, which makes all the more questionable those who would be prepared at this point to announce withdrawal before the surge has been even fully implemented in Iraq.

Iraqi and American forces are making incremental gains, specifically in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. And let me emphasize, President's strategy, from the first time he outlined it to the Nation, from the time, a few days before that what I and a handful of Members were in the Cabinet Room and the President described his strategy for a surge of military reinforcements.

This is not about sending in enough forces to provide military control of the entire country of Iraq. President's strategy, the so-called surge, actually found its origin in the Iraq Study Group report, which, if memory serves, on page 74 in the published edition, actually said that, and I quote, that the Iraq Study Group said that they would support a temporary increase in forces or a surge in U.S. forces in Baghdad to quell violence in the capital city, to make possible a political solution.

Now, I know in the past, and perhaps even before the end of this week, many of my colleagues who oppose the war will cite glowingly the Iraq Study Group. But I will take whatever opportunity I have, informally or formally, to respectfully point them to that page of the Iraq Study Group report. The President's surge is a military strategy designed to quell violence in the capital city of Baghdad, and, to no less extent, in Ramadi and the al-Anbar Province.

The belief is that if we can, U.S. and Iraqi forces in the lead, if we can quell violence in the capital city, we can create an environment where the political process and a political settlement and, ultimately, regionally a diplomatic settlement can take hold. And there is some evidence that that surge strategy is beginning, just beginning to deliver on the security that will make that political and diplomatic settlement possible. The most significant element, therefore, of the new strategy is being carried out in Baghdad.

Baghdad, it is widely known, was the site of most of the sectarian violence in Iraq, and therefore it is the destination for most of our reinforcements. At this point there are three additional American brigades that have reached the Iraqi capital, and while another is in Kuwait preparing to deploy, one more will arrive next month.

The Iraq Government, for its part, when I am home in Indiana I am asked a lot about what are Iraqis doing for their own security as a part of this surge and as a part of this war. Well, the Iraqi Government is meeting its pledge to boost force levels in Baghdad.

Here is a jarring statistic, Mr. Speaker. For every U.S. combat soldier deployed in Baghdad, there are now roughly three Iraqi military forces deployed in Baghdad. Let me say that again. For every one American combat force, for every American soldier, combat soldier deployed in Baghdad, there are now roughly three soldiers as a part of the Iraq Security Force deployed in Baghdad.

And American troops are now living and working side by side with Iraqi forces. I actually had the chance to see it firsthand in our trip to Baghdad; in fact, our trip to a joint operating center with General David Petraeus on April 1. These neighborhood small outposts are called joint security stations.

In fact, on this map, Mr. Speaker, we see the coalition's forward operating bases in the fall of 2006. Here we see in the center of town the international zone, so-called the Green Zone. Of course here is the Baghdad international airport. And at this point, in fall of 2006, roughly, these diagrams, these small triangles, 1, 2, 3 and 4 represented all of the forward operating bases in Baghdad.

Since the beginning of the surge, now, Mr. Speaker, there are 21, 21 combat outposts throughout Baghdad, and 26 joint security stations run together with U.S. and Iraqi forces. These are seen as a key building block in an effort to increase security for Baghdad's residents.

As I mentioned, we traveled out to the al Karada joint security station during my April 1st trip to Baghdad. We helicoptered from the Green Zone. We landed at the al Karada joint security station. These joint stations, for all the world, they are like neighborhood police stations. And U.S. forces, literally, on 2-week rotations, move to these stations.

And it was very compelling to me to see U.S. and Iraqi forces side by side when we arrived in this joint operating security station. And they greeted us warmly, and we spoke with Iraqi military personnel; spoke, of course, with American personnel.

And I remember one of the facts that stuck out in my mind was that when they were building this particular joint operating center at al Karada, right literally in downtown Baghdad, they offered, out of respect to religious traditions, they offered the Iraqi forces, they said, Well, you could have separate living forces from the U.S. forces so that you wouldn't have to essentially bunk together. And it was the Iraqi soldiers who said, Absolutely not. We want to bunk together with the American forces. We want to, essentially, be in the same dorm with them, and we are deploying with them every day.

And there is a tremendous sense for all the world, Mr. Speaker, of esprit de corps that one gets when you see the American soldier and you see the Iraqi soldier, as we did that day at the al Karada joint security station.

Let me say again, I was unable to bring tonight, Mr. Speaker, a diagram that would show all of the locations of the 26 joint security stations that now dot the landscape of Baghdad, 26 stations that were not there in the fall of 2006. Security issues would not permit me to put that on, essentially, global television through C–SPAN coverage, looking in.

But for all the world, if you can imagine, here we had four forward-deployed stations in the Green Zone, and now, literally, I would mark up this map into almost an incomprehensible state if I were to draw the 21 combat outposts and the 26 combat security stations that are now on the ground in Baghdad.

Iraqi and American forces are working together. Specifically, not only living at these stations, but deploying 24/7 to clear out and secure neighborhoods. If a heavy fight breaks out, American forces step in. Iraqi forces learn, side by side, valuable skills in fighting shoulder to shoulder with our troops.

Iraqi and American forces have also, in the past 3 months, received more

tips than during any 3-month period on record.

Baghdad is not safe; can we say that for the RECORD? But Baghdad is safer because of the presence of U.S. and Iraqi forces throughout the capital city. And an evidence of that, number one, is a sharp decline in insurgent sectarian violence within the city of Baghdad, a sharp decline which I mentioned in my opening comments.

But also evidence we can point to is more tips from people in Baghdad than at any 3-month period on record. By living in Baghdad neighborhoods, it is believed that American forces are getting to know the culture, the concerns, the local residents.

I don't understand every operational profile of our presence in Iraq. I have been there five different times. But my sense is, Mr. Speaker, that prior to, essentially, the embedding of these joint security stations throughout the capital city, American forces essentially would deploy from one of our forward operating bases where there was a problem, patrol, deal with the problem and go back to base. Now we go, we stay. And that is what is being widely credited with two facts, one good and one bad.

The first fact, as I have mentioned, and I will say again, there has been a drop in sectarian violence in Baghdad, as well as in Ramadi, which I will get to in a minute. That is the good news.

The bad news is that the enemy is fighting back in the form of horrific bombings. We saw the bridge car bomb. We saw bombings against unsecured marketplaces, particularly recently on the south and west of Baghdad. Heartbreaking, violent acts by the enemy, which I believe give evidence of the fact that we are taking the fight to the enemy and the enemy is responding.

But again, let me say again, sectarian violence overall in Baghdad is down in the first 2 months. And it gives us just an inkling of hope for success of the surge.

Baghdad is not safer. But it is safer because of the presence of 26 joint operating centers where U.S. and Iraqi forces deploy and live together and patrol the neighborhoods 24/7.

Now, let me speak a little bit about the al-Anbar Province, truly an extraordinary experience from our time in Baghdad. Our delegation traveled west into the al-Anbar Province, the capital of which is the city of Ramadi. And Ramadi is a very dangerous place, Mr. Speaker. It is a place where there has been a great and tremendous and consistent insurgent presence.

Ramadi historically is where, frankly, most of the Sunni power in the country was focused. Most of the wealth of Sunnis was concentrated in Ramadi, and therefore the Sunni insurgency against the al-Maliki government found much expression in violence in that city.

Here is a picture on the ground, unclassified, of the insurgent presence in Ramadi, of just 2 months ago, the river passing through the middle of town. I believe the U.S. military base is in this direction.

But just to give you a snapshot here, Mr. Speaker, you can see all of this red area that shows insurgent presence in Ramadi. Quick snapshot, the present picture in Ramadi is this. And again it is in direct connection with the leadership of General Odierno, U.S. forces and Iraqi forces employing exactly the same strategy that I just described is being deployed in Baghdad, the deployment of joint security stations, Iraqis and Americans working together.

Now, the city of Ramadi that was highly compromised 2 months ago with insurgent presence, according to U.S. sources this would represent al Qaeda in Iraq positions, now, according to official U.S. military sources, now has been reduced in its scope to a relatively isolated area of the city of Ramadi.

Well, how is that happening? Is it all about joint operating centers and the military response?

Well, it certainly is a part of that. But I would also add, a great deal has to do with a sea change that is taking place among Sunni sheiks and Sunni leadership.

Remember, in the history of the three successive national elections and referenda that took place in Iraq, for the most part, Sunnis, and particularly Sunnis in al-Anbar Province, not only were opposed to measures, but refused to participate in most cases.

Now, there has been a breakthrough in recent months, and we met with a Sheik Sitar, a courageous man, roughly my age, who ended up, Mr. Speaker, being featured for all the world on a 60 Minutes program a week after we returned from Iraq, for all the world to see and hear his own words.

We sat in a room with Sheik Sitar and we heard them describe what he helped to found. It is called the Iraq Awakening Movement. The Iraq Awakening Movement already includes 22 of 24 Ramadi-area Sunni tribes that are now cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Let me say that again; 22 of 24 Ramadi area tribes are now cooperating with U.S. and Iraqi and coalition forces.

□ 2045

Sheikh Sattar himself has an extraordinary and compelling story. His father was killed in his native town of Ramadi by al Qaeda. His two brothers were killed by al Qaeda. And to hear him tell it, Sheikh Sattar just said, That's enough, and began in the process with other sheikhs and other tribal leaders throughout the Sunni population of Ramadi and to say this is not going to happen like this anymore. And they came to the American base in Ramadi and sat down with officials and said, We want to figure out how to move forward.

He made comments that were echoed across the Nation on that ''60 Minutes'' CBS television program. And I commend Scott Pelley and I commend CBS News for replaying his comments.

He looked at us across the table and spoke about the American soldier. And I paraphrase now, Mr. Speaker, but Sheikh Sattar said, Anyone who points a gun at an American soldier in Ramadi is pointing a gun at an Iraqi. It was incredibly moving. He spoke of their gratitude to the American soldier. And then he looked me right in the eye across this small conference table at the U.S. military base in Ramadi, and he said, Congressman, anyone who tells you the Iraqi people don't like Americans is lying to you. And then he said with even greater emphasis, Iraqis love Americans and, particularly, he added, the American soldier. I don't have his words precisely correct, but it was very moving to this small-town boy to hear a man roughly my age living in this war-torn country who was now risking his life to stand with his own nascent government, the al Maliki government, and to stand with U.S. and coalition forces.

We are forward deployed. Much of the strategy that I described in Baghdad we were told in Ramadi is being employed in Ramadi. But I think something else is happening in the al-Anbar province: tribal sheikhs cooperating with American and Iraqi forces to fight al Qaeda, providing highly specific intelligence. We have sent more troops to the al-Anbar province with these significant changes where presence of al Qaeda terrorists in the city has declined significantly in the past 6 months, as evidenced by these charts.

But it would be important to note, as I return to my original graphic, that al Qaeda responds to these changes with sickening brutality. But the local Sunnis in al-Anbar province and in Ramadi are refusing to be intimidated, and they are stepping forward to drive out terrorists.

We are cracking down on extremists also gathering in other parts of Iraq, but as I conceded on a news program this afternoon, one of the concerns that I heard, Mr. Speaker, from General Odierno in Ramadi and General Petraeus in Baghdad was that as we move U.S. and Iraqi forces into those major cities with a special emphasis on Baghdad, number one, the enemy will fight back, and the horrific bombings of the past few weeks are evidence that this enemy will not go quietly. But, number two, the other, and we are seeing evidence of this already, is that the al Qaeda and the insurgent elements, to the extent that we are able systematically neighborhood by neighborhood to drive them out of those major cities, that they will move into the outlying province, and we are seeing evidence of that.

But let me say again the strategy here is not to go neighborhood by neighborhood to secure the entire city of Baghdad. The President's surge strategy is a clear hold-and-build strategy designed to provide enough security in Baghdad and a critical area in

Ramadi to allow a political solution to take hold.

We can assume our enemies will continue to fight back. These are ruthless, blood-thirsty killers who not only desire the power that would come with a nation-state in Iraq, but they desire to do us harm and to do harm to our posterity. They will continue to fight back. But I believe there is evidence that this strategy to clear areas, to hold them with the joint operating centers, again, 26 joint operating centers throughout the city of Baghdad where American forces and Iraqi forces are living and patrolling 24/7 is a strategy where we can provide the kind of stability to facilitate the political and economic progress that will make a lasting peace possible.

And let me speak to that. As we increase our troop levels, it is vital that we also strengthen our civilian presence, provisional reconstruction teams, organizations that restore basic services, stimulate job creation, promote reconciliation.

I was at USAID yesterday. I met with Ambassador Tobias and learned about the extraordinary efforts that are taking place to meet real and human needs on the ground. I met in my office today with the head of the Iraqi Red Crescent organization, an admirable organization modeled in effect after the American Red Cross but built on the Muslim tradition of the Crescent. The Iraqi Red Crescent is an organization that day in and day out is answering the humanitarian crisis on the ground in this violent and war-torn country.

Military operations are beginning to open up a breathing space, though, for political progress, and therein lies the real hope, Mr. Speaker. As we sat down with the foreign minister, seven members of the cabinet, and the Vice President of Iraq over a long and lengthy and brutally frank dinner in the ambassador's headquarters in the Green Zone at the end of our day in Baghdad, we emphasized the need to move forward on reconciliation, to move forward on an agreement that would distribute the oil revenues equitably between all the ethnic groups in Iraq. And, truthfully, as they reminded us, the Iraq legislature has met some key milestones, met one benchmark by passing a budget that commits $10 billion for reconstruction. The Council of Ministers recently approved legislation that would provide a framework for an equitable sharing of oil revenues.

Now that legislation will go before the Iraq Parliament for its approval. The government has formed a committee to organize provincial elections. And I want to say of the al-Anbar province, with Sunnis now in the Iraq Awakening movement beginning to stand with U.S. and Iraqi forces and the al Maliki government, we urged them very strongly to move as quickly as possible toward provincial elections with the expectation that Sunnis in the al-Anbar province and in other provinces of the country would, in many cases for the first time, participate and take ownership in the electoral and the governing process.

The Iraqi cabinet, as they reminded us, are all taking steps to finalize toward agreement on a de-Baathification law. And in a conference in Egypt next month, Prime Minister Maliki will seek increased diplomatic and financial commitments for Iraq's democracy.

Ultimately, let me say as clearly as I can, during these difficult days for the war in Iraq, the answer in Iraq is not exclusively military, but we must provide the military support to give the al Maliki government and this nascent democracy the capacity to defend its capital. To defend its capital is at the very essence of the credibility of any government. And given the opportunity to provide basic services and basic security in Baghdad, we believe that all of these objectives could move forward, not only internally in Iraq. The de-Baathification law, oil revenue sharing agreement, provincial elections, all of which would contribute to a widening sense of ownership in this new democracy, but also it would provide an opportunity where Iraq could begin, as it has just recently begun, to reach out to its neighbors with the United States already at the table. Even with countries greatly antagonistic to our interests in the region, the United States has been willing to sit down and begin to facilitate the achievement of a diplomatic solution.

The truth is that giving up on Iraq would have consequences far beyond Iraq's borders, and there may be time before the end of this week and before the end of this debate to expand on that. But let me just say emphatically, Mr. Speaker, that withdrawal is not a strategy. Withdrawal would do nothing to prevent violence from spilling out across the country and plunging Iraq into chaos and anarchy.

In fact, when I asked the leader of the Iraq Red Crescent movement today what a precipitous and early withdrawal of U.S. forces would mean, he painted a frightening picture of a humanitarian crisis, true civil conflict and strife, potentially widening into a wider regional war generated by the instability and uncertainty in Iraq.

But that being said, let me speak, if I can, in my time remaining, of the proposal that we will consider this week on the floor of the Congress. And that is what I have described in the past as the Democrat plan for retreat and defeat in Iraq. I wanted to come to the floor tonight, Mr. Speaker, to basically share what General David Petraeus shared with me in Baghdad and just the seedlings, the very beginning of hope, that the President's planned surge is beginning to produce modest progress in Iraq.

But let me say again at the outset, it is easy to be understood in this debate, it is a tough time in Iraq; but despite a recent wave of insurgent bombings, this war is not lost, and Congress would do well to reflect very deeply on the real facts on the ground, not the images in the media, but the real facts on the ground that I have recited tonight, that General Petraeus will recite to Members tomorrow, before we make a decision to embrace a plan contemplated by House and Senate agreement, a $124 billion spending plan expected to come to the floor with the goal of bringing U.S. troops home beginning July of this year and ending U.S. combat operations no later than March of 2008.

When I think of the Democrat plan in the midst of this hard-fought effort, street by street, the sacrifices that American and Iraqi soldiers are making, and the fact that both in Baghdad and in Ramadi sectarian violence is down. Despite the horrific bombing, sectarian violence is down. Cooperation in the form of tips is increasing. We are just beginning to see the inklings of hope in Iraq. And yet the Democrat majority will bring forward a proposal that would micromanage it, deadlines for withdrawal. For all the world, that makes me think of George Orwell, who said: ''The quickest way to end the war is to lose it.'' And I really do believe the Democrat plan is a prescription for retreat and defeat.

Now, let me speak about the proper role of Congress in this context. And I think it speaks of the great wisdom of our Founders that Congress, as a body of 435 otherwise well-intentioned men and women, is not particularly well suited to the conduct of war. In fact, at the Constitutional Convention, almost no issue was more summarily dealt with than what our Founders referred to as war by committee. They feared it. Their experience was derived from stories of the Revolutionary War as General Washington was chased from New York all the way across New Jersey, facing almost certain defeat in the Philadelphia suburbs across the river, the Delaware.

□ 2100

Every single night, General Washington would later record that he would sit in his tent and write letter after letter to Congress asking for appropriations, asking for support, asking for details.

As our founders put together the Constitution of the United States, they said there would be one Commander in Chief, and that would be the President of the United States of America; and that we would not have war by committee. And the Constitution is more clear on no other fact. Congress can declare war, Congress can choose to fund or not to fund military operations, but Congress cannot conduct war. In fact, those times in American history where Congress has intruded itself on the purview of the Commander in Chief have been marked as summarily perilous times.

I am recently reading up on the committee in this Congress during the Civil War. I think it was loosely entitled ''The Committee on the Conduct of

the War.'' And it was a committee in Congress that did not just attend itself to President Lincoln's use of public assets and funding of the war, but it involved itself well into recommendations about military operations and the like. It would be none other than Robert E. Lee, the leader of the Army of the Confederacy, who would say, ''That committee in Congress was worth two divisions to me.'' Robert E. Lee, leading the Army of the Confederacy, would say that the Committee on the Conduct of the War, functioning in Congress, was worth two divisions to him. And yet, we will see this majority bring forward a measure that I believe violates both common sense, the Constitution and our history with a plan for withdrawal from Iraq. And a message of withdrawal at a time when we are just beginning, in the midst of horrific counterattacks by the enemy, where we are just beginning to see evidence of modest progress from the surge, I think is precisely the wrong message to send.

But on this constitutional argument it is worth noting that it would not simply be my reading of history and the Constitution that would criticize the plan for a timetable for withdrawal included in the war funding bill this week, but let me quote, if I may, Mr. Speaker, an editorial in the Los Angeles Times that was published in the month of March under the heading, ''Do We Really Need a General Pelosi?'' Their main point was, in effect, ''Congress can cut funding for Iraq, but it shouldn't micromanage the war.'' That newspaper went on to say, and I am quoting now the Los Angeles Times, ''After weeks of internal strife, House Democrats have brought forth their proposal for forcing President Bush to withdraw troops from Iraq by 2008.''

The L.A. Times said, ''The plan is an unruly mess, bad public policy, bad precedent and bad politics. If the legislation passes, President Bush says he will veto it, as well he should.''

They go on. ''It was one thing for the House to pass a nonbinding vote of disapproval, it's quite another for it to set out a detailed timetable with specific benchmarks and conditions for the continuation of the conflict.'' They add, ''Imagine if Dwight Eisenhower had been forced to adhere to a congressional war plan in scheduling the Normandy landings; or if in 1863 President Lincoln had been forced by Congress to conclude the Civil War by the following year.''

''This is the worst kind of congressional meddling in military strategy,'' so wrote the left column lead editorial in the L.A. Times in March. Not exactly a ringing endorsement from the editorial board of record in the home State of Speaker PELOSI.

And about the same time the Washington Post, really another lion of the liberal media in America, wrote in a lead editorial entitled, ''The Pelosi Plan for Iraq,'' the following: ''In short, the Democratic proposal to be taken up this week is now an attempt to impose detailed management on the war without regard to the war itself.'' ''Congress should rigorously monitor the Iraq Government's progress on those benchmarks.'' ''By Mr. Bush's own account, the purpose of the troop surge in Iraq is to enable political progress.'' They wrote, ''If progress does not occur, the military strategy should be reconsidered, but aggressive oversight is quite different from mandating military steps according to a flexible timetable conforming to the need to capture votes in Congress, or in 2008 at the polls.'' So wrote the editorial in the Washington Post.

You know, it really is amazing sometimes how politics, common sense and the Constitution can make such strange bedfellows. I don't think I've ever come to the floor of this House and quoted in any length the lead editorial in either the Washington Post or the L.A. Times, but I do so approvingly this evening. In both cases, these newspapers identified what I asserted at the beginning, that the Democrats should heed the call of the Constitution and common sense and reject the Pelosi plan for retreat-defeat in Iraq. They should reject it on the basis of our history and Constitution, but they should also reject it because, as General Petraeus will describe to our colleagues tomorrow, in the midst of horrific counterattacks by our enemy, there is evidence of modest progress on the ground. Sectarian violence is down in Baghdad and Ramadi. Cooperation among civilians is up. And I say once again, where there once were four forward operating bases in the fall of 2006 in Baghdad proper, now, like the joint security station I visited on April 1st in downtown Baghdad, now there are 26 joint operating stations throughout Baghdad, almost as many, I'm told, in Ramadi, where U.S. and Iraqi forces are living together 2 weeks at a stretch and deploying and patrolling neighborhoods 24/7. This is exactly not the time to embrace arbitrary timetables for withdrawal, or for Congress to tell our generals on the ground how to conduct the war.

I believe in my heart of hearts that the American people know that we have but one choice in Iraq, that victory is our only real option. And let me say this again; if I am repetitive tonight, Mr. Speaker, it is intentional. I mean to be understood.

This is a tough time in Iraq. As General Petraeus comes to Capitol Hill this week, I expect that he will tell our colleagues what he told me and Members of the House and Senate on the streets of Baghdad just 3 short weeks ago. And that is that, despite a recent wave of insurgent bombings, counterattacks by the enemy responding to our surge on the ground, this war is not lost. In fact, because of the President's surge and the brave conduct of U.S. and Iraqi forces on the ground, we are making modest progress in Iraq.

In Baghdad, despite the recent bombings, sectarian violence is down. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the presence of 26 joint operating stations where U.S. and Iraqi forces are deployed. And as I mentioned earlier, the extraordinary developments in Ramadi, which has seen a precipitous decline in the last 2 months in sectarian violence, and also has seen 22 of 24 Ramadi-area Sunni tribes now cooperating and supporting U.S. forces and supporting the new al-Maliki government is truly an extraordinary development, to say the least.

I believe in my heart that the American people know that victory is our only option. And I just began recently, Mr. Speaker, rereading a biography that you might well approve of. It is the David McCollough biography of President Harry Truman. I have appropriated a few quotes by President Truman that I found particularly compelling and particularly appropriate at this time, and I will quote them with respect because I think they speak to our time, which is a tough time in Iraq, and a hard time for an American people that have little interest, almost at the level of our DNA.

We are not a Nation interested in foreign entanglements. We are not an empire-building Nation. And throughout our history, we have quickly grown weary of long-term foreign entanglements. So this is a hard time at home, it is a hard time on the ground. We are taking the battle with the enemy with the President's surge, and the enemy is fighting back.

President Truman faced such times, difficult days both in his personal career and as a wartime President. So I will reflect on his words and that of a leader of another country in difficult times as I reflect what I think is very close to the character of this Nation. Harry S. Truman said, ''Carry the battle to them. Don't let them bring it to you. Put them on the defensive, and don't ever apologize for anything.'' That was advice he gave to Hubert Humphrey in September of 1964.

In 1945, President Truman said, ''I wonder how far Moses would have gotten if he had taken a poll in Egypt. What would Jesus Christ have preached if he had taken a poll in Israel? Where would the Reformation have gone if Martin Luther had taken a poll?'' President Truman went on to say, ''It isn't polls or public opinion of the moment that counts; it is right and wrong, and leadership, men with fortitude and honesty and a belief in the right that makes epochs in the history of the world,'' President Harry Truman said in 1945.

And for those who would embrace withdrawal as a means of achieving peace, President Truman says out of history, quote, ''A reminder: The absence of war is not peace.'' And I would argue the absence of U.S. forces in Iraq is not peace; it is a prescription for anarchy.

I would also appropriate from history as I speak to what I truly believe in my heart is at the very core of the American identity, and that upon which we

must avail ourselves during this time of testing in the war on terror, and they are the words of Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England, and a man considered by many to be the greatest leader of the free world in the 20th century. He gives us words that I believe speak to our time. And I quote, ''Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on a strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to the war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy, but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.''

Winston Churchill would also say, ''You ask, 'What is our policy?' I will say it is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalog of human crime. That is our policy.

''You ask, 'What is our aim?' I can answer with one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of terror, victory however long and hard the road may be. For without victory, there is no survival.''

And of our time, where many of our countrymen would wish away this war-torn part of the world, I can't help but think that this quote is appropriate. Sir Winston Churchill said, ''One ought never to turn one's back on a threatened danger or try to run away from it. If you do, that will double the danger; but if you meet it promptly and without flinching, you will reduce it by half.''

These are difficult days in Iraq. Sacrifices that American forces and their families are making are deeply humbling to me and to every Member of Congress and, I believe, of the American people. But I believe that, despite the recent wave of insurgent bombings, this war is not lost. In fact, because of the President's surge and the bold leadership of General David Petraeus in Baghdad and General Odierno in Ramadi, our U.S. forces on the ground, in combination with Iraqi forces, we are beginning to see modest progress in Iraq.

□ 2115

In Baghdad, despite recent bombings, sectarian violence overall is down, and the same is true in Ramadi. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the deployment of 26 joint operating centers throughout the city. A city where there once were simply an International Green Zone, the Baghdad Victory Base, and four forward-operating bases in Baghdad, now throughout the city, in form when I visited them on April 1 in Baghdad for all the world looked like neighborhood police stations. They call them joint operating centers, where U.S. and Iraqi forces live together, work together, eat together and deploy together, in 2-week rotations. And it is making a difference on the ground.

In the al Anbar province in Ramadi, it is extraordinary to say 22 of the 24 Sunni tribal leaders, led in part by Sheikh Sattar, with whom I spent one of the most memorable hours of my life on April 2 earlier this month, Sunni leadership is standing with the al Maliki government, standing with the American soldier, rejecting the insurgency, rejecting al Qaeda, and reclaiming their city and their country for peace and security.

We have a long way to go, but not that long before we know whether this new surge strategy will work. I believe it is imperative that Congress give General Petraeus not only a willing ear tomorrow when he comes to Capitol Hill, but I think it is high time that we sent the President a clean bill, take out all the micromanagement of the war, all the unconstitutional benchmarks and datelines for withdrawal, for that matter, take out all the pork-barrel spending that has nothing to do with our military, and send General Petraeus and our soldiers on the ground the resources they need to get the job done and come home.

You know, I was asked by a soldier in Ramadi, a soldier from Indiana, he looked at me and he said, Congressman, I just want to ask you an honest question. He said, When is it going to be enough? When are we going to have been here long enough? And I said to him with great humility, I said, Son, I will answer this as straight with you as I can: I think we have to stick around here until these people can defend themselves, and not a minute longer.

That is what we need to accomplish, Mr. Speaker. We need to stick around long enough to help Iraqi security forces provide the basic stability in their capital and in the critical al Anbar province, and particularly in Ramadi, in order that the political process and the diplomatic process regionally can go forward. And then, like Americans of past generations, we can pick up and go home, and only ask for a debt of friendship in return.

It is a time of testing for our country. It is not a time for shrinking back. But based on the evidence, the facts that General Petraeus shared with me in Baghdad and will share with us on Capitol Hill, it is time to give the surge a chance to succeed.

The Congress will likely pass a supplemental bill that will have unconstitutional benchmarks and datelines for withdrawal. The President of the United States will keep his word. He will promptly veto that legislation. But my hope, and, candidly, Mr. Speaker, my prayer, is that after we have gone through this exercise and Congress has made its importance felt, we will get our soldiers the resources they need and we will give them the time and the freedom to succeed in this surge.

But there are no guarantees. We are up against a ruthless and brutal enemy, who even this very day claimed American lives in another ruthless suicide car bomb attack.

I believe it would be a stain on our national character that we would not wipe off for generations if we were to walk away now; if we were simply to say to the good people of Iraq, hundreds of which I have had the chance to meet and to speak with over my five journeys there over the last 4 years of this war, it would be a stain on our national character to that generation of Iraqis to leave them unable to defend themselves, to harvest a whirlwind of sectarian violence, revenge killings, and to leave them to become a part of a country that would become subjugated by the blood-sworn enemies of the United States of America. And it would be a stain on our national character to leave Iraq, in effect, worse off than how we found it.

As bad as it was under Saddam Hussein, I can't help but believe that if those who fight us in the form of the insurgency and al Qaeda today gain the reins of control in that Nation, that we will, as Winston Churchill said, we will double the danger, and our children and our children's children will pay a price we dare not imagine.

So we are faced with choices today, and my challenge to my colleagues and to any looking on is to listen to the facts, not the adjectives, not the ''spin,'' as it is referred to in the popular debate, but listen to the facts. And the facts are that it is a tough time in Iraq. We are facing a determined enemy. But that despite a recent wave of insurgent bombings, this war is not lost.

In fact, because of the President's surge and the extraordinary courage of U.S. and Iraqi forces, we are making modest progress in Iraq. In Baghdad, despite recent bombings, sectarian violence is down. Baghdad is not safe, but it is safer because of the presence of more than two dozen U.S. and Iraqi joint operating centers. And now 22 of 24 Sunni sheikhs and tribal leaders have come together in Ramadi and the al Anbar province to support the al Maliki government and U.S. forces.

Let's give General Petraeus a willing ear. Let's listen to the facts. And then let us reject timetables for withdrawal, pork-barrel-laden spending bills, and simply provide our soldiers the resources they need to get the job done and come home safe.

I believe that we can secure victory for freedom in Iraq, and in so doing we will deliver a victory for freedom, not only for the Iraqi people, but for ourselves and our posterity. We will unleash, as the President has spoken so eloquently, the forces of freedom and stability in a part of the world that has known little of either. That is my hope, and that is my prayer.

ECONOMIC OBSERVATIONS BY THE 43 MEMBER STRONG, FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE DEMOCRATIC BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut). Under the