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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SALAZAR).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 12, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN T. SALAZAR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

PRAYER

Rabbi Ellen S. Wolintz-Fields, Congregation B'nai Israel, Toms River, New Jersey, offered the following prayer:

Ruler of the Universe, bless our leaders with an understanding and discerning mind, a listening ear, a compassionate heart, and insightful thoughts.

We thank You, O God, for enabling us to live in a free country, and we remember those who do not yet live in freedom. We pray that the leaders of our country help those who suffer in the hands of others and come to the assistance of those held in captivity. We thank You God for the confidence the constituents place in their elected leaders.

This week in many communities, we conclude the reading of the Book of Numbers, the end of the desert journey of the Israelites. We learn from their example that life is a journey. Let us make each day meaningful, different than the one before, helping others, and moving towards a life of peace and freedom.

We ask God's blessings upon the men and women who serve in the House of Representatives: may God bless you and guard you. May God show you favor and be gracious to you. May God show you kindness and grant you peace. And let us all say, Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. LAMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. LAMPSON led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING RABBI ELLEN S. WOLINTZ-FIELDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to acknowledge the occasion of Rabbi Ellen Wolintz-Fields serving as today's guest chaplain. After that opening prayer, I might say that it is easy to see why our community is so graciously and well served by the rabbi. Her 3-year-old daughter, Cameron Elizabeth, is also with us here today, and we want to welcome her here as well.

The opportunity for having visiting chaplain guests is very special as it allows religious leaders from different faiths to begin our day of legislative duty.

On August 1, Rabbi Wolintz-Fields will celebrate her first anniversary as rabbi of Congregation B'Nai Israel in Toms River, New Jersey. Since 1950, this synagogue has served as a place of worship and guidance for teachings of Conservative Judaism while offering multiple support and volunteer services for our community. Today, the rabbi has over 400 families in her congregation.

Throughout her time both studying and serving, the rabbi has received various awards and recognitions for her contributions to preserving the Jewish faith. She is a recipient of the Goldstein Prize for Jewish History and the Rosalyn Gooen Milians Education Award.

While she has numerous noteworthy achievements, the Rabbi is particularly proud of her family. She is married to Jonathan Fields and, in addition to Cameron Elizabeth, they have a 1½-year-old son, Coby Dov.

I appreciate the rabbi taking time from her busy schedule to visit Washington, DC in order to give the opening prayer in the people's House, and I am glad I had the occasion to assist her to do so.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 10 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

RESPONSIBLE DEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, today we take another step in ending the war in Iraq as we consider the measure to withdraw our troops by next April.

Each day, support for President Bush's war crumbles as evidence mounts of the cost of this debacle: $10 billion a month, more lives lost, and thousands of hopes and dreams shattered.

We who opposed this war from the start for the reasons played out every day on the front pages of our newspapers understand that the redeployment of 200,000 American soldiers and contractors in Iraq will take some time to implement, but that is no excuse not to start now as rapidly and responsibly as possible to get our people out of the crossfire of this religious civil war. They have done all that they can, all that we should expect of them.

I call on the doubters in Congress to stop enabling the President; instead, to join us in supporting the strongest, most direct measure possible, not just to send the President a message, but to rein him in and bring our soldiers home from this nightmare.

THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, in the past weeks terrorists with possible al Qaeda ties have attempted car bombings in London. Following these failed attempts, terrorists struck the Glasgow, Scotland airport. This attack by two doctors in a flaming Jeep Cherokee, doctors who have been sworn to protect life, were arrested for attempting mass murder by incineration of innocent civilians.

In addition, terrorists held children captive in a mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan; and an al Qaeda homicide bomber in Yemen murdered seven Spanish tourists and two Yemeni guides while they were visiting a temple of the ancient Queen of Sheba.

Recent events such as this should alert Americans that the global war on terrorism is a worldwide threat and that Iraq and Afghanistan remain the central front of the battle as claimed by bin Laden's spokesman Zawahiri.

Instead of practicing party politics, Congress should rely on the leadership of our military leaders such as General David Petraeus. By stopping terrorists overseas, our troops are protecting America's families at home.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11th.

REBUILDING A NEW VA HOSPITAL IN NEW ORLEANS

(Mr. JEFFERSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank Chairman BOB FILNER and members on his House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for holding a field hearing in New Orleans on this past Monday on the subject of rebuilding a new VA hospital in the greater New Orleans area.

The VA has narrowed its search for the location of a new VA hospital to a downtown New Orleans site and to a site in the adjoining Jefferson Parish. For reasons of taking advantage of the synergies of the relationship of Tulane and LSU medical schools to the new VA hospital and because of the savings and long-term operational costs that can be realized, I and several of the panelists recommended the New Orleans site as most beneficial to the care of our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, in the end it is important that we put our veterans first. When we have called on them to serve our country, they have not asked us to wait. They have responded to our Nation's call to duty at great risk to themselves and to their families. Nearly 2 years after Hurricane Katrina struck, we have already asked them to wait far too long. It is now time to build a world-class, state-of-the-art VA hospital in downtown New Orleans and to do so in the shortest possible time. We call on the Veterans Administration to do just that.

GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, today we will see another attempt by the liberal majority leadership to drive a stake between the American people and the brave men and women fighting in the global war on terror. Today's latest attempt is called a precipitous withdrawal. The American people would label it a cut and run. Our soldiers deserve the confidence of their leaders, not second-guessing arrogance by politicians half a world away.

The leadership thinks Iraq is lost, despite the fact that the new mission has shown signs of progress, including the fact that half of Baghdad has been secured, the Baghdad Security Plan. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker are going to provide us a progress report in September, but that is not fast enough for the liberal leadership. They expected the new strategy to win overnight. Don't they know that you don't find instant gratification in war?

One thing is certain: surrender and failure in securing Iraq hold catastrophic consequences for freedom, the U.S., and the Iraqi people. Surrender would send the wrong message. It will say the U.S. is weak, that roving death squads in the streets of Baghdad and ethnic cleansing are acceptable to us. It may be fashionable to want to pull out of Iraq, but it sends the wrong message.

WE OWE AN EXPLANATION TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

(Mr. SESTAK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SESTAK. I can be and am disappointed in this bill we will vote on today, intended to reduce U.S. troops in Iraq. It aims to begin the reduction, but leaves an unspecified limited presence of troops in Iraq by a deadline of April 1, 2008, a level of troops and their missions to be determined by President Bush.

It does no harm, but how much good? One might say it is a step in the right direction even with such significant limitations, but I have concern. Congress is, as it should be, close to ending this tragic misadventure; however, ending this war is necessary but insufficient. How we end it and by what means is of even greater importance for our troops' safety and our own security. A Congress intent upon mandating such a new security policy through force of law owes a careful explanation to the country why and how it is to be done, including dealing with what would occur in the aftermath. We don't do that here.

I will vote for this bill for it does no harm, perhaps some good. But I will do so reluctantly, for it does little to define the how and why within a strategic approach of a date within a year that we can redeploy from Iraq and leave behind the possibility of an unfailed Iraqi state. We owe such an explanation since it is us by force of law that will end this tragic misadventure.

DEMOCRATS SETTING RECORDS

(Mr. AKIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. AKIN. Americans love to compete and to set records. In fact, people all over the world record their records in the Guinness Book of World Records. But there are some kinds of records called Darwin Awards for foolish behavior where people eliminate themselves by doing something unusual. One man took a pistol and decided to rob a gun store and got shot.

The Democrats are not using a pistol, but they have been setting some records. They have just set one this year, that is, the largest tax increase

in the history of this country. It comes out to about $290-some-billion. But that means to the average household a $3,000 tax increase. What household can absorb a $3,000 tax increase in just 1 year alone?

Unfortunately, that is not the only record being set by the Democrats. They have doubled that record in terms of how much money they have spent, over $800 billion, which would come to $6,000 per family. American people would be better if we didn't set records like that.

NASA ASTRONAUT SUNITA WILLIAMS

(Mr. LAMPSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, it is truly a pleasure to rise today to acknowledge the achievements of NASA astronaut Sunita Williams.

On Friday, June 22, Sunita returned to Earth after spending 195 days in space. She now holds the record for the longest duration space flight by a woman. Also, after completing four space walks lasting a total of 29 hours, 17 minutes, she is a record holder for the most hours outside a spacecraft by a woman.

I was at the emotional STS–117 crew return welcome a few weeks ago at Johnson Space Center and saw firsthand how Sunita's achievements serve as an inspiration to so many young people, particularly young ladies, interested in pursuing their dreams of space exploration. She has shown them that if they work hard and are dedicated, they too can one day reach the stars.

□ 1015

THE CAUSE OF CLEANING UP CONGRESS HAS GROUND TO A HALT

(Mr. KIRK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KIRK. Mr. Speaker, despite promises that are only 6 months old, the cause of cleaning up the Congress has ground to a halt.

We should kill pensions for Members of Congress convicted of a felony. And after passing a shadow bill in January, this action has completely stalled. No action in February, March, April, May or June.

Now the real surprise. Despite promises of spending reform, Congressional leaders blocked efforts to stop funding the construction of the bridges to nowhere. That's right. Democratic leaders in Congress now support building the bridges to nowhere, one structure, connecting to an island with just 50 people, the other to an island with only 22, at a cost to the U.S. taxpayer of over $1 billion. Only 6 months into a new Congress, and now Congressional leaders do not want to kill pensions for Congressional felons, but do want to build the bridges to nowhere.

SCHIP

(Ms. SCHWARTZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, in 1992, I was proud to spearhead one of the first State initiatives to enable working families to purchase private health insurance for their children; 5 years later Congress passed the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP, enabling every State to implement its own plan.

Today 6 million American children have health coverage thanks to SCHIP. We in Congress are building upon the extraordinary success of SCHIP to extend it to almost 9 million American children who are now uninsured. The goal of insuring all American children is within our reach.

Yet, instead of working with Congress to reach this goal, the President this week made it clear that health insurance for children is not important to him.

Does the President really believe that America's children do not deserve quality ongoing health care? Does the President really believe that emergency rooms are the best place for primary care for children?

It is clear to just about every American that health insurance is expensive, and for too many American families, it is simply too expensive.

Congress recognizes the urgency of the situation, and we move ahead, unlike the President, to take this opportunity to cover every American child.

DALITS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I hosted a screening of a documentary entitled, ''India's Hidden Slavery,'' a film about contemporary slavery in India among the 250 million Dalits or untouchables.

The caste system has at the top the Brahmin or priestly class, the ruling class. That includes politicians. At the very bottom, not even considered a caste because they're too low, the Dalits. Today, in the world's largest democracy, an unknown hidden system exists with people without basic human rights.

In contrast to the economic progress in some sectors in Indian society, below the surface is a society still racked by caste, with millions suffering and held hostage to a social structure that reinforces segregation, poverty, injustice and slavery. Recently, village leaders just condemned to death a couple that married outside their caste.

While the government of India has taken some small steps to outlaw the caste system, in reality, it permeates every aspect of life there.

I commend India for its economic progress, but I urge government leaders to ensure that all people in India have basic human rights, and especially the 250 million Dalits.

THE IRAQ WAR

(Mr. HODES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq is in its fifth year, but the Bush administration still refuses to develop a realistic, strategic plan for the Middle East and Iraq.

The Iraq War has destabilized the region, and the United States must reassert and protect its fundamental national security interests by actively taking the necessary steps to stabilize the Middle East.

Today Congress will debate a plan which stands in stark contrast to the delusional policies of the Bush administration which have sapped our military readiness, strengthened al Qaeda, wasted our resources and betrayed the trust of the American people.

There is a way forward, and we must be bold, courageous and strategic. Without leadership in the White House, we must continue to exercise leadership in the people's House. And I assure the American people that we will.

MISSING OR CAPTURED AMERICAN SOLDIERS

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. You know, we shouldn't even be discussing surrender in Iraq today because 2 months ago today, three American soldiers were captured in Iraq. Tragically, the body of Private First Class Anzack was found a few days later in the river. DOD has changed the status of Specialist Jimenez and Private Fouty from unknown to missing/captured. Considering that the military found their IDs in an al Qaeda safe house, I'm sure they're being mistreated. And I hope and pray that they can stay alive until we can rescue them.

As a former prisoner of war for nearly 7 years in Vietnam, I know what these guys are going through. We must find them, and we must bring them home. Naysayers in Washington should not be talking about pulling the plug on our troops in Iraq when we have our own men missing in action who need to be rescued.

SCHIP

(Mr. ENGEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, in our Energy and Commerce Committee, we're

pushing ahead to grant health care coverage to millions of children, a program called SCHIP. Unfortunately, the President's proposal to reauthorize SCHIP is woefully inadequate. His funding level won't even cover the children currently enrolled in the program. Nationwide, 6 million children are covered by the SCHIP and another 9 million are uninsured. If there was ever a question of where our priorities are, it should be with strengthening and modernizing the SCHIP program.

I've just come from a meeting with our Governor, Eliot Spitzer. New York operates a separate stand-alone program under SCHIP, Child Health Plus. As of December 2006, nearly 400,000 children were enrolled and receiving comprehensive health coverage in the program. Our stand-alone SCHIP program has increased enrollment by over a quarter of a million children since the start of the program.

Nationwide, we have to remember that the SCHIP program is a critical part of our health care safety net, providing health coverage to more than 4 million low-income children who do not qualify for Medicaid. SCHIP has served New York and our country well, and I will continue to work to improve access for children's health care coverage.

ELIMINATING INFECTIONS FROM MEDICAL DEVICES

(Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, at least half of all cases of hospital-acquired infections are associated with medical devices. These medical devices include items ranging from tongue depressors to catheters and heart valves.

These preventable infections infect 2 million patients per year and end up costing 90,000 lives and over $50 billion annually. These are unacceptable costs for patients, taxpayers and Congress.

Up to this moment this morning, we already have over 1 million cases, you can see on this chart, 47,000 deaths and a cost of over $26 billion, and that's just as of today.

Yesterday we passed the Medical Device User Fee Act which included an amendment in there that I placed in that allows for the government, the GAO, to study these issues. They note that even after rigorous cleaning and sterilization, virus and bacteria still exist on reused medical devices.

Manufacturers, providers and facilities should take measures to reduce the rate of infections. I urge my colleagues to refocus our Nation's health care system on patient choice, patient safety and patient quality and join me in working on these things together where we can save lives and save money for our Nation.

STRATEGIC RESET

(Ms. SCHAKOWSKY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, today I will vote for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. I agree with the 70 percent of Americans who want our troops out of Iraq. And I agree with the comprehensive report called ''Strategic Reset'' from the Center for American Progress, written by three authors, one of whom is Lawrence Korb, former Assistant Secretary of Defense.

They write, ''The current Iraq strategy is exactly what al Qaeda wants, the United States distracted and pinned down by Iraq's internal conflicts, trapped in a quagmire that has become the perfect rallying cry and recruitment tool for al Qaeda. The United States has no good options, given the strategic and tactical mistakes made in Iraq since 2002, but simply staying the course with an indefinite military presence is not advancing U.S. interests.''

Today we will vote to change the course to bring our troops home by April of 2008. I will proudly vote in favor of that bill.

WAR IS NOT WON BY EVACUATION

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker: ''Many people think the best way to escape war is to dwell upon its horrors and to imprint them vividly upon the minds of the younger generation. They flaunt the grisly photographs before their eyes. They fill their ears with tales of carnage. They dwell on the ineptitude of generals and admirals. They denounce the crime and the folly of human strife.''

These words of Winston Churchill in 1934 stressed upon the people of Great Britain that the cynics, who don't believe some things are worth fighting for, should not have their way. They ignore the victories and accomplishments and, instead, focus upon setbacks.

War is hard. It has always been hard. Congress will once again debate a timetable retreat for American troops to leave Iraq. The timid will want to turn their back on the enemy and leave a desperate people and a nation floundering; all this because war is hard.

Retreat tells the enemy that if they wait America out, we will bow out of the fight.

Mr. Speaker, Churchill also remarked, ''war is not won by evacuation.''

And that's just the way it is.

WORK-FAMILY POLICIES

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, a new report that just came out by the Government Accountability Office shows that the United States lags far behind other industrialized countries in providing policies that help families balance the competing demands of work and family responsibilities.

Critics argue that implementing such policies here could have a negative impact on the economy, but many countries with strong work-family policies are among the world's most competitive economies in the world and have unemployment rates that are the same or lower than the United States.

More and more businesses are finding that doing right by workers is good for the bottom line. Paid parental and sick leave, flexible work schedules and access to child care provide a boost to worker productivity, retention, and recruitment that outweigh the cost of implementing such policies.

U.S. workers, businesses, and the economy would benefit from stronger work-family policies.

''A copy of the GAO report is available on the JEC website at http://www.jec.senate.gov/Documents/Hearings/06.14.07%20Work-Life%20Balance/GAO%20-%20Kay%20Brown%20Testimony%20--%20FINAL.pdf.''

THE GROWING ECONOMY

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, this week, news reports came out indicating our Federal budget deficit has continued to drop and our economy continues to grow due to tax relief policies passed by Congress in 2001 and 2003.

In spite of that good news, Democratic leadership in Congress is discounting advancements made possible by this tax relief by trying to slap U.S. taxpayers with a $400 billion tax increase that will slow our economy and its current progress.

Additionally, Democrats piled $6 billion in new spending onto January's omnibus budget bill to finish the 2007 appropriations process, passed a budget for 2008 that is $20 billion more than the President's budget request, and added billions in extra spending to the few appropriations bills the House has passed.

Raising taxes hurts American families, discourages innovation and hinders job creation. Let's work together in this Congress to make tax relief permanent and continue to grow our economy. Together, this Congress can foster further prosperity and build a better, brighter future for our country.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

□ 1030

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2956, RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 533 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 533

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 2956) to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, and for other purposes. All points of order against the bill and against its consideration are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The bill shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) four hours of debate, with three hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; and (2) one motion to recommit.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 2956 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials into the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 533 provides for consideration of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, under a closed rule. The rule provides 4 hours of debate, with 3 hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the Committee on Foreign Affairs. The rule waives all points of order against the bill and its consideration except those arising under clause 9 or 10 under rule XX. The rule provides for one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear about what we will be told today by the President. We will be told that adequate progress has been made in some areas of Iraq but more work needs to be done in others. What this really means, of course, is that once again security and political benchmarks have not been met, that vast areas in Baghdad that were supposed to be under control by now are not, that a drop in violence in some areas has been met with increases in violence elsewhere, that political compromises are not being made with sufficient speed by the Iraqi leadership, nor is there any available evidence that the situation is going to change, that the escalation will suddenly become more effective next week or next month. Instead, all signs indicate that in September when General Petraeus reports to Congress, he will deliver the exact same message that we are hearing today: to be patient.

But patience means nothing when deadlines are constantly moved. In January a leading Member of the minority said that we would be able to tell in a few months if the escalation was working. Now we hear it is still too early to tell. It has been 7 months. Which prediction are we supposed to believe?

As time has advanced, an absence in progress has not been met by an absence in tragedy. At the present rates, between now and September, another 200 Americans will be killed, 200 more families changed forever. And hundreds, if not thousands, more innocent Iraqis will have died as well.

We will hear today that to change our course in Iraq will signal defeat. But this willfully ignores the entire history of the Iraq War. After more than 4 years of relentless conflict, including recent months of historically high troop numbers, experts tell us that in Iraq al Qaeda is stronger than ever. A military official told ABC News yesterday al Qaeda's ''operational capability appears to be undiminished.''

The conclusion is clear: The American military is not being given a chance to bring peace to Iraq or to fight our enemies, not because our troops are not good enough but because the current mission is inherently flawed.

It is not weakness to admit a strategy is not working and to change it. It is the very opposite: a sign of strength. Our leaders corrected failing courses when they arose during the Civil War and during World War II. Why should this war be different?

What Democrats are calling for today is not a retreat. It is not a surrender. It is a statement that Congress will not wait for another ambiguous so-called progress report and will not give the administration another chance to move the goalposts. Instead, we will refuse to needlessly sacrifice our soldiers, weaken our military, undermine our national security, and bleed our country in ways that even the worst terrorists could ever dream of. And it is a statement to the Iraqi people that they will no longer have to live as dual victims: victims of violence and victims of a flawed military strategy that is at best failing to bring peace to the country and at worst perpetuating their suffering.

The bill will refocus our troops on fighting terrorists. By doing so, the disastrous strain being placed on our Armed Forces will be lifted without sacrificing security objectives, and their healing can begin.

Second, it will remove a strategy from the playing field that is certainly not working and throw open the door to new approaches which may actually succeed. For example, the legislation requires the President to report by January on how he is engaging U.S. allies and regional powers in the effort to bring stability to Iraq. Far from abandoning the Iraqis or lessening American security, we will finally make the rehabilitation of Iraq the international priority that it must become. The only thing we will be abandoning, in other words, Mr. Speaker, is this administration's mistakes.

And to my friends on both sides of the aisle, yesterday I received an advance copy of a report from the Defense Department's Inspector General that will be made public today. It detailed the work of some of the first companies to make armored vehicles and armored kits for our soldiers in Iraq. They were given sole-source, unbid contracts even though senior defense officials objected, favoring a competitive process instead.

I hope people heard what I said. Senior officials at DOD wanted competitive bidding for these machines, but they were overridden by the Under Secretary of Defense.

The results were sadly predictable. The companies failed to meet demand and sent critically important equipment late. Some of the armor that our soldiers were sent had cracks that had simply been painted over to try to fool them instead of fixing it. In certain instances two left doors were sent for the same vehicle. Troops already fighting a deadly foe had to use their precious time and energy to improvise and come up with ways to turn useless equipment into something that could protect them.

Our soldiers have been asked to endure terrible hardships, as well have their families, some of which, I am ashamed to say, have been the direct result of the practices of this administration, and they are enduring them to this day and at this very hour. For Congress to leave them there, to ask them to continue fighting to survive under the mounting weight of a flawed mission—that, Mr. Speaker, is the true definition of abandonment. And after 4 years, Democrats are tired of this Congress abandoning our troops to a fate they have never deserved.

I would ask everyone in this Chamber how they would justify this continued carnage to the families of our soldiers. With all we know now, how can we still say to the children of those killed or to the young men and women maimed for life, your loss was needed?

We cannot. What we must say to them is this: You have given enough. It is time to come home.

The American people know what must be done and the majority of this Congress knows what must be done. And all that remains is for those of us here who are still opposed to this bill to decide that they too have had enough and that they will join their countrymen in voting not with the President but with the troops, with the people of Iraq, and with the people of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, here we go again. It has actually been several weeks now since we have had a meaningless vote on the issue of Iraq, and so I suppose we are overdue for another one. This Democratic leadership, Mr. Speaker, as we all know very well, still bereft of any real ideas, has been forced once again to resort to demagoguery, bringing up a bill that they know, they know full well, will not be enacted into law. And knowing that their proposal cannot withstand any critical scrutiny, they have once again shut down the process and brought this to us under a completely closed rule, not allowing any of the very thoughtful proposed alternatives to be considered whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Rules Committee, I offered an amendment that would have allowed us to have the opportunity to substitute their policy with the very thoughtful and responsible recommendations that were included in this bipartisan Iraq Study Group package of recommendations proposed by Mr. Baker and Mr. Hamilton, a group of Democrats and Republicans, very respected, authorized by this Congress. And they refused to allow us to have any opportunity whatsoever to even debate, much less vote, on the issue of the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

Now, just yesterday morning in an interview on National Public Radio, our former colleague Mr. Hamilton, who, as I said, was the co-Chairman of the Iraq Study Group, had a very eloquent and thoughtful interview on the need for us to implement the Iraq Study Group recommendations. Unfortunately, the Democratic leadership, I guess fearful that responsible policy would prevail and that this institution might, in fact, pass the measure calling for implementation of the Iraq Study Group, prevented us from having the chance to debate or vote on the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

The last time we went through this charade, they at least had the luxury of making dire predictions of failure for the new strategy in Iraq led by General Petraeus, and the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules once again basically talked about failure and said that we haven't met any benchmarks. Even then, Mr. Speaker, the strategy was actually showing early signs of success. But this time, this time, the counterinsurgency offensive is well under way and making clear and irrefutable progress.

I will say once again, Mr. Speaker, that we are seeing clear and irrefutable progress taking place. As one major newspaper recently editorialized, ''Demands for withdrawal are no longer demands to pull out of a deteriorating situation with little hope. They are now demands to end a new approach to this conflict that shows every sign of succeeding.''

Mr. Speaker, U.S. forces, working side by side with Iraqi Army and police forces, have penetrated enemy strongholds in the belt surrounding Baghdad and are driving them out. They have cut off al Qaeda's supply lines and transport routes. They are destroying car bomb factories. Sectarian deaths have plummeted. Al Qaeda operatives are finding themselves increasingly isolated, their safe havens destroyed, and their ability to move freely between neighborhoods severely diminished.

Mr. Speaker, our efforts have been significantly bolstered by former Sunni insurgents who have joined the fight against al Qaeda. I am going to say that again. Former Sunni insurgents have now joined our effort in the fight against al Qaeda. Nowhere has this process been more critical than in the al-Anbar province.

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Last year, a leaked Marine intelligence report conceded this province as completely lost. That was the report that came out. Today, Mr. Speaker, al-Anbar is our best success story, and a template for U.S. Forces working together with both Sunni police and Shia army forces to combat al Qaeda.

General David Petraeus, the man who has received bipartisan praise and was confirmed unanimously by a vote of 82–0 in the United States Senate as he began his work, he said to the New York Post, ''We are beginning to see a revolt of the middle against both extremes.''

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is our commanders on the ground who have repeatedly pointed out that the tipping point didn't come until the tribal leaders sought a prolonged offensive by U.S. and Iraqi forces.

Now, let's think back to what life was like in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. After a quarter-century reign of terror by Saddam Hussein, Iraqis clearly would not immediately rise up against any force until that force has been driven into retreat. We had to demonstrate our strength and our commitment before we earned the trust of the tribal leaders and their support in the fight against al Qaeda. That is exactly what we're doing today in Baghdad and the surrounding areas.

The New York Times recently reported on the Anbar success and how we are currently applying it to the fight to secure Baghdad. According to a July 8 report, former insurgents in Sunni neighborhoods of Baghdad are now taking up arms against al Qaeda. Now, that is July 8th, a report that came out just 4 days ago. Now, it quotes Petraeus as saying, ''Local security is helped incalculably by local support and local involvement.''

Now, Mr. Speaker, this success is so critical because it gets to the heart, it gets to the very heart of our twin goals in Iraq. First, that Iraqis will be able to provide their own security, that we have an increased ISF, the Iraqi Security Forces, and that they are trained adequately; and second, that this security will provide the environment that makes a political solution possible.

The quicker that Iraqis achieve security and a peaceful, stable democracy, the quicker our troops will come home. And as we listen to the speeches that will come following mine about the quest for our troops to come home, make no bones about it, I share the goal and the vision that is put forth by our friends, Mr. MCGOVERN and Ms. SLAUGHTER, and others, who will argue to bring our troops home. We all want to make sure that that happens.

Our new strategy, Mr. Speaker, has clearly brought us closer to that goal. And if our fight against extremism was not urgent enough, the Associated Press report that came out just late yesterday afternoon that al Qaeda's global network is again on the rise and has regained much of the strength that it had in September of 2001 is an important thing for us to recognize.

Mr. Speaker, as the terror network rebuilds and regroups, it seems absolutely preposterous that we would abandon not only a key front in the global war on terror, but a place where we have al Qaeda on the defensive and where we are diminishing their capabilities, especially in light of that report that came out just last night about their renewed strength. Yet, the Democratic leadership inexplicably wants to pull the rug out from under our military commanders. Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps not so inexplicable if we consider that their planned withdrawal would be complete just in time for the 2008 elections.

But let's pretend that there is no election looming on the horizon here. Regardless of this bill's impact on American electoral politics, what would be the effects on Iraq? Now, Mr. Speaker, even the New York Times editorial board, which apparently doesn't often read its own news reports and is calling for an immediate withdrawal, acknowledges the inevitable dire consequences of its recommended course of action. In the very editorial calling for surrender, it outlines the overwhelming refugee and humanitarian crisis that would immediately ensue, how the fight would spill out all across the region. And Mr. Speaker, in the most callous way, it acknowledges the terror that would be inflicted upon

those Iraqis who worked with us because they believed our promises. How cold and cynical. How callous can we be to stand here and debate the notion of abandoning the Iraqi people, not only to genocide, but to the targeting of the very individuals who have bravely worked with us.

The Democratic leadership wants to wave a magic wand and make this war go away. I wouldn't mind a magic wand myself, and certainly the American people would appreciate a quick and tidy solution. But I'm afraid that this solution attempts to salvage nothing but party politics. The Iraqi people, Mr. Speaker, would not be quite so lucky.

Furthermore, NPR recently reported that the quick withdrawal time frame that the Democratic leadership dreamed up has no basis in reality. It would take a year or more to safely withdraw all U.S. troops from Iraq, and it would take significant combat forces to protect the withdrawal. We would have to fight our way out all the way to the Kuwaiti border. There simply is no magic wand in this war, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the greatest irony of this bill is that it calls for detailed reports for a strategy in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, we have a strategy, and while it was only fully operational less than 1 month ago, it is already succeeding. The Democratic leadership, in their absurdist logic, want our military to abandon their strategy, go home and write a report about what they would have wanted to accomplish if they had stayed. And if that weren't cruel enough, Mr. Speaker, they would have to watch terror and genocide unfold as they retreated. Now, I cannot fathom a more disastrous policy for our security or the Iraqis'.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to reject this rule and the underlying bill itself.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert into the RECORD an article from the Washington Post this morning entitled, ''White House Isn't Backing Iraq Study Group Follow-Up,'' and points out that the House voted 355–69 last month to reestablish the study group, but the President is blocking it.

[From washingtonpost.com, July 12, 2007]

WHITE HOUSE ISN'T BACKING IRAQ STUDY GROUP FOLLOW-UP

(By Robin Wright)

Despite an overwhelming House vote last month to revive the Iraq Study Group, the White House has blocked reconvening the bipartisan panel to provide a second independent assessment of the military and political situation in Iraq, said several sources involved in the panel's December 2006 report.

Co-Chairman Lee H. Hamilton, several panel members and the U.S. Institute of Peace, which ran the study group, were willing to participate, according to Hamilton and the congressionally funded think tank. But the White House did not give the green light for co-chairman and former secretary of state James A. Baker III to participate, and Baker is unwilling to lead a second review without President Bush's approval, according to members of the original panel and sources close to Baker.

White House support is critical for any follow-up review. ''It is not likely to happen unless the White House approves it,'' Hamilton, a Democratic former congressman from Indiana, said in an interview. ''The group can't go ahead without its concurrence or acquiescence, as we need travel support and access to documents.''

The White House does not want independent assessments to rival the upcoming Sept. 15 reports by Gen. David H. Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, U.S. officials said.

The White House indicated that it sees no need for an immediate follow-up to the report, noting that it is implementing a strategy consistent with many of the panel's recommendations. ''The next report due in September by General Petraeus must include an assessment of our objectives as they relate to Baker-Hamilton. September will be the appropriate time to determine how that strategy is progressing,'' said National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe. ''We look forward to remaining in contact with members of the group.''

The House voted 355 to 69 last month to allocate $1 million for the U.S. Institute of Peace to reestablish the group of 10 prominent Republicans and Democrats, which included former Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former defense secretary William J. Perry and, until his appointment, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates.

Congressional sponsors called the White House's reluctance a missed opportunity. ''The ISG provides an opportunity to bring the country together. . . . If you had a serious illness, you would want a second opinion. We are at war. You want to have the best minds looking at a problem,'' said Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R–Va.), who proposed the ISG and co-sponsored the bill to reconvene it. ''Having another independent, bipartisan assessment will take out the venom in the debate.''

Rep. Christopher Shays (R–Conn.), another co-sponsor, warned that the White House's move would cost further support among Republicans.

''It's really shortsighted,'' he said. ''It's going to further isolate the president. . . . You can't rely just on Petraeus and Crocker. They are good people, but they're still in the thick of battle and you need the view from the outside. The fact the White House doesn't want it indicates they are afraid of what the ISG might say.''

The White House did not initially embrace the ISG report. But it has gradually adopted key recommendations, including the controversial proposal to pursue diplomatic talks with Iran and Syria, the countries that have most aided or abetted Iraq's insurgents and illegal militias. Last month, 23 Democrats and 34 Republicans co-sponsored a House bill to implement all the ISG recommendations as the way forward in Iraq.

But other groups are pursuing independent reviews of U.S. policy and Iraq's performance. The Iraqi Security Forces Independent Assessment Commission—made up of 14 former generals and defense officials—is examining Iraqi military capabilities. The panel, which is mandated by Congress, is chaired by retired Gen. James L. Jones. The group is currently in Iraq; its report is due in October.

The Government Accountability Office is doing a separate congressionally mandated study on the 18 benchmarks set for the Iraqi government to meet. And the U.S. Institute of Peace is reconvening many of the experts the ISG originally relied on to discuss Iraq's future.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4½ minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and the underlying bill, H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this House ought to voice its gratitude to the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON, for bringing before this House a thoughtful, responsible bill that outlines what we must do next in Iraq.

The bill clearly notes that our uniformed men and women have carried out and completed their mission for which they were authorized by Congress. The search for weapons of mass destruction is over. There were none, not a single one. The regime that put Iraq in an impossible international position no longer exists. So it's time that we draw down our troops from Iraq and require this administration to clearly define what the troop requirements and costs will be for the next phase of U.S. involvement in Iraq, a far more limited mission to root out al Qaeda and protect our diplomatic personnel inside Iraq.

The bill also promotes the kind of active diplomacy with Iraq's neighbors necessary for achieving a more lasting climate of stability in Iraq and throughout the region. Much, much more, Mr. Speaker, must be done. I expect to see stronger legislation in September, but this bill puts us on the right path.

For 5 long, deadly years, this Congress has done nothing but rubber-stamp a tragically flawed policy. It is shameful. Whatever the cause the President and many Members of Congress thought they were pursuing in Iraq, it is lost. Political leaders inside Iraq appear incapable of putting national interest ahead of sectarian and personal agendas. Iraqi security forces operate more like sectarian militias. And despite their best efforts, the additional military forces we have poured into the Baghdad region have not been able to change the equation.

Over 3,600 of our troops have lost their lives to this battle. Thousands more have been wounded. It is wrong, Mr. Speaker, simply wrong to ask them to continue to sacrifice their lives and their limbs for this failed policy.

The war in Iraq is breaking the back of our military. It is causing severe damage to the Federal budget to the tune of $10 billion each month, and causing grave harm to the future fiscal health of our Nation. It continues to undermine our most important political, diplomatic, military and strategic alliances. It saps our ability to focus on global terrorism and to safeguard our own people. And it has contributed to the chaos inside Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, it is past time for change. And while President Bush keeps scorning deadlines and promising

breakthroughs that never come, it is clear that he lacks the vision, the wisdom or the courage to chart a new course. It is frighteningly clear that the President plans, instead, to stay the course and dump this mess on the next President.

It is time for Congress to step up to the plate and change direction in Iraq. It is time for every Member of this House to work together to draw down our forces and bring our troops home to their families and their communities.

For too long Congress has been complicit, and the American people are frustrated, and they are angry. We don't need more studies or commissions. We don't need more excuses. We don't need more delay. Too many lives are being lost. What we need is for Members of Congress to make a choice, to stand up and be counted. Will you continue to rubber-stamp the current disastrous policies in Iraq or will you vote for change?

We must act now, Mr. Speaker. This is simply too important to wait any longer. Too many lives are on the line.

All of us, no matter how we originally voted on the war, share in the responsibility in what is happening in Iraq. All of us, by not voting to change course, are responsible for sending so many of our brave men and women into a civil war where far too many of them have been killed.

If the President of the United States will not respect the will of the American people and end this war, then Congress must.

[From the Los Angeles Times, July 11, 2007]

U.S. TROOP BUILDUP IN IRAQ FALLING SHORT

(By Julian E. Barnes and Ned Parker)

BAGHDAD.—In the Ubaidi neighborhood in the eastern part of this city, American soldiers hired a local Iraqi to clean the Porta-Potties at their combat outpost. Before the man could start, members of the local Shiite militia threatened to kill him.

Today, the Porta-Potties are roped off, and the U.S. soldiers, who could not promise to protect their sewage man, are forced to burn their waste.

As part of the Bush administration's troop ''surge'' strategy, the U.S. unit here had moved into an abandoned potato chip factory hoping to push out the militia, protect existing jobs and provide stability for economic growth. Instead, militia members stymied development projects, cut off the water supply and executed two young Iraqi women seen talking to U.S. soldiers, sending a powerful message about who really controls Ubaidi's streets.

In the next few days, the Bush administration is scheduled to release a preliminary assessment of its overall Iraq strategy. Officials may point to signs of progress scattered across the country: a reduction in death-squad killings in Baghdad, agreements with tribal leaders in Al Anbar province, offensives north and south of the capital.

President Bush defended his strategy Tuesday, demanding Congress give his administration more time and insisting that America can ''win this fight in Iraq.'' To underscore his request, Bush sent top aides to lobby lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

But as the experience of the troops in Ubaidi indicates, U.S. forces so far have been unable to establish security, even for themselves. Iraqis continue to flee their homes, leaving mixed areas and seeking safety in religiously segregated neighborhoods. About 32,000 families fled in June alone, according to figures compiled by the United Nations and the Iraqi government that are due to be released next week.

U.S. forces have staged offensives to push insurgents out of some safe havens. But many of the insurgents have escaped to new areas of the country, launching attacks where the U.S. presence is lighter.

And there has been no sign of any of the crucial political progress the administration had hoped to see in Iraq.

U.S. commanders are painfully aware that they are running out of time to change those realities. Army Gen. David H. Petraeus, the top American commander in Iraq, has made several efforts to slow the clock in Washington. Each time, it has sped up.

The full complement of the ''surge'' arrived in Iraq last month, bringing the total to 28,500 additional troops. Military officers originally hoped to have until 2008 before they had to render a verdict on the strategy. Then the Washington timeframe shrank to September. Now, it is shrinking further, with Congress demanding answers even sooner.

Supporters of the troop buildup insist that small steps could grow into larger and more long-term successes if lawmakers are patient.

''Right now we are three weeks into this. It's not like flipping a light switch,'' said a military officer in Baghdad, expressing the frustration of many commanders. ''Time has to be given for things to work.''

Commanders point to Ramadi, the capital of Al Anbar province, as a showcase for the kind of results the military wants from the current strategy. Once a battlefield, the city is now largely peaceful, calm enough that in March, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki was able to pay his first official visit.

But military officers stress that it took about nine months of sustained effort to make Ramadi a relatively pacified city. And with its volatile mix of Sunni and Shiite Muslims, Baghdad presents a far more complex challenge than all-Sunni Ramadi.

The interim progress report that Bush promised to release this week is likely to emphasize the success the military has had in killing Sunni militants in the ''Baghdad belts,'' the cities and towns that dot the major rivers and highways leading to the capital. In recent weeks, the newly arrived U.S. forces have been focused on fighting members of Al Qaeda in Iraq, a militant Sunni group made up of Iraqis and foreign fighters.

Top generals say the strategy is crucial to securing Baghdad. Only by controlling the routes into the capital, and denying militants safe havens, can the U.S. and Iraqi militaries keep out the car bombs that stoke sectarian violence inside the capital.

But leading Iraqis are less sure of the strategy.

Mahmoud Othman, a Kurdish member of the Iraqi parliament, said the U.S. approach may be successful at weakening Al Qaeda in Iraq. But he said Americans would not be able to solve Iraq's sectarian conflict or stop clashes between armed groups in Baghdad neighborhoods.

''The surge has an important effect in fighting Al Qaeda,'' the independent politician said. ''On the Sunni-Shiite conflict, it hasn't had any effect. . . . Extremist Shiites and Sunnis are fighting each other. The Americans can't stop this.''

U.S. officials have made little, if any, progress with their persistent calls for Iraqi officials to take steps toward reconciliation between Shiites and Sunnis.

Key administration officials, most prominently Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Vice President Dick Cheney, have visited Iraq to push for passage of an oil-revenue sharing law, provincial elections and reform of rules barring members of the former ruling Baath Party from government jobs.

But the Iraqi government is bogged down by fighting among Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish parties. It is unclear whether the oil law, the one piece of benchmark legislation still given hopes for passage before September, will reach a vote any time soon.

The number of death-squad killings in the capital, one sign of sectarian divisions, is down from earlier this year. But the number remains roughly at the level seen after the 2006 bombing of Samarra's Golden Mosque, which served as a catalyst for the extreme sectarian violence.

In Baghdad, the number of bodies found dumped in the streets dropped to 540 last month from 830 in January. Some American officers say those numbers could rise again. And others say that the decline may simply represent the depressing reality that most Baghdad neighborhoods are now segregated, meaning there are fewer people left for death squads to kill.

Maj. Gen. Joseph Fil, Jr., the commander of U.S. forces in Baghdad, said that American troops at the end of June controlled about 42% of the city's neighborhoods, up from 19% in April.

But to many Iraqis, that is little comfort. ''The Americans do not make me feel safe,'' said Amin Sadiq, a 30-year-old Shiite worker in the Ghadeer neighborhood of east Baghdad. ''When you hear the speeches of the top U.S. military leaders, you think that everything is ideal and perfect and Iraq will be better. But when you see how the U.S. soldiers behave, I really feel I should not trust the leaders.''

The American military has helped bring a tense truce in some areas, but has not re-integrated once-mixed neighborhoods.

The western Baghdad neighborhood of Ghazaliya, once a prosperous mixed middle-class area, was riven by sectarian violence in 2006. It is now divided between Shiites in the northern end and Sunnis in the south, with the U.S. military stuck in the middle, trying to keep the peace.

''Last year, things were bad. This year is worse than before,'' said a man in his 50s who identified himself as Qais Qaisi.

The presence of Iraqi and American security forces means that Sunnis cannot fight back against the Shiite militias, which have the tacit support of the Iraqi army unit in the area, Qaisi said. But he nevertheless voiced concern about a possible American pullout.

''If the multinational forces withdraw, there will be very bloody sectarian battles,'' he said.

Military officers routinely say that improving the economy is a prerequisite to improving security. And U.S. forces, by putting up barriers and controlling traffic, have been able to reopen some marketplaces that had been targeted by suicide bombers. Although that has allowed some neighborhood commerce, success with other projects has proved more elusive.

The Pentagon is working to reopen state-owned factories and has identified several dozen that can be renovated and restarted. But that work is slow, and many residents say they see few improvements in their neighborhoods.

Although U.S. forces have been able to overcome militia threats and start small neighborhood projects such as installing streetlights, they are not able to initiate larger undertakings.

''We aren't doing anything meaningful,'' said one mid-level noncommissioned officer. ''Where are the real projects? We aren't offering these people enough safety, or money, or jobs.''

Amid the political setbacks and continuing violence, however, there are signs of relative calm in some areas.

Earlier this year, the streets of Baghdad were desolate at sunset. Now, in places, there are signs of life.

In Yarmouk, a neighborhood in west Baghdad, 18-year-old Ahmed Shakir used to see bodies on the street every day. Snipers fired from hidden perches and gunmen clashed with U.S. and Iraqi soldiers. But last month, after weeks of U.S. patrols, his neighborhood started to feel safe—safe enough for Shakir to stay outside on the basketball court until 8:30 p.m.

''It is usually me and three of my friends, we always go play basketball,'' he said. ''Now we have U.S. and Iraqi patrols roaming the streets every day. If they continued doing this, things will remain better. If not, then it will get worse for sure.

CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

To: Members of the 110th Congress.

From: John Podesta, Lawrence Korb, and Brian Katulis.

Re: Iraq Study Group's Recommendations Overtaken by Events in Iraq.

Date: July 11, 2007.

Senators Ken Salazar (D–CO) and Lamar Alexander (R–TN) have introduced legislation that would adopt all of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. There are growing signs that the White House and Republican legislators, having previously rejected the ISG report late last year, will now seek to co-opt the ISG recommendations this summer and fail to provide a bipartisan veneer to their efforts to pretend they are shifting course in Iraq.

We acknowledge the important contributions made by the ISG and its co-chairmen James Baker and Lee Hamilton, but progressives need to point out that some of the ISG's recommendations are ambiguous and others have been overtaken by events. Congress needs to understand that the ISG's three main recommendations face five key issues that raise questions about the relevance of the ISG's recommendations today.

The ISG report had three main recommendations:

1. Place greater emphasis on political benchmarks for the Iraqi government to ensure disaffected groups (specifically the Sunnis) are brought into Iraq's political process.

2. Accelerate and increase the training of Iraqi security forces to allow them to take over from U.S. forces and transition U.S. forces from combat missions in 2008.

3. Initiate a region-wide diplomatic offensive to contain and resolve Iraq's conflicts.

The ISG recommendations now face five practical obstacles:

1. Conditioning U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraq on the outdated ''We'll stand down when the Iraqis stand up'' formula.

The main problem with the ISG report is that it conditions the eventual U.S. troop withdrawal on Iraq's splintered national leadership. The ISG report spells out a long list of preconditions for withdrawing U.S. troops, which actually gets the situation backwards—the United States needs to put Iraqis and the countries in the region on notice to motivate them to act more constructively in their own self-interest in order to contain and resolve Iraq's multiple internal conflicts.

The fundamental challenge with Iraq's security forces is not skills building and training. It is instead a problem of motivation and allegiance. The last six months in Iraq have reinforced the point that Iraqis will not take responsibility as long as U.S. forces remain in the country in such large numbers. Despite the latest escalation, the Iraqi government has not made any progress toward reconciliation.

The Bush strategy as well as the core ISG recommendations ignore a fundamental reality—that the situation in Iraq has little chance to improve until U.S. troops begin redeploying.

2. Placing too much focus on Iraq's central government, a dysfunctional and divided government that lacks the unified support of its own leaders.

The ISG recommendations place a strong emphasis on getting the Iraqi national government to meet several political benchmarks that are not only unachievable in the short term but irrelevant today because of changed conditions in Iraq. In fact, the Iraqi national government is increasingly trapped in bitter disputes along sectarian lines that have paralyzed the government.

Iraq's leaders fundamentally disagree on what Iraq is and should be. The benchmarks passed by Congress in May—the subject of a forthcoming report from the Bush administration—ignore the key reality that Iraq may suffer from unbridgeable divides.

Meeting these political benchmarks will likely have no effect on the major conflicts in Iraq and may well exacerbate the Kurd-Arab and intra-Shi'a conflicts emerging in Iraq's northern and southern regions. As such, these benchmarks provide false hope for resolving a series of conflicts that require a much deeper solution than the United States can provide unilaterally.

3. Paying insufficient attention to the 2005 Iraq Constitution and the will of the Iraqi people.

The ISG report outlines a course that would lead to the unraveling of Iraq's constitution. One of the ISG's main recommendations is that ''the [United States] should support as much as possible central control by governmental authorities in Baghdad, particularly on the question of oil revenue.'' But this cuts against the grain of what Iraqis supported in their own constitution, passed by popular referendum in 2005. Iraq's constitution establishes a framework for a strongly decentralized federal system.

Not surprisingly, many Iraqi leaders objected to the recommendations of the ISG report. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, rejected the ISG report. In addition to criticisms from Iraq's leaders, the ISG recommendations lack a broad-base of support among Iraqis, a strong majority of whom want U.S. forces to leave Iraq within a year.

According to a poll of the Iraqi public conducted in 2006, 71 percent of Iraqis wanted the Iraqi government to ask for U.S.-led forces to be withdrawn from Iraq within a year or less. Another 61 percent support attacks on U.S.-led forces. In short, many Iraqis are opposed to the ISG recommendations, and as a result the United States would face severe problems attempting to implement them.

4. Supporting the unconditional training of Iraq's security forces, which is deeply problematic.

The core of the ISG report is the recommendation that the United States accelerate and increase the training of Iraqi security forces. It proposes an American advisory effort of between 10,000 and 20,000, comparable to the U.S. advisory strength in Vietnam at its height. Increasing the capacity of the Iraqi security forces, however, won't rectify their three main problems:

The Iraqi security forces are far from reliable. The Pentagon estimates that at least one-third of the Iraqi Army is on leave at any one time; desertion and other problems bring the total to over half in some units. Of the 11,000 Iraqi soldiers assigned to the recent U.S.-led offensive in Baquba in June, only 1,500 showed up. Infiltration by sectarian militias into the Interior Ministry has been identified as a severe problem. Many Iraqi security forces have been implicated in sectarian violence, most notably the National Police and certain elements of the Iraqi Army. Allegations have emerged during the Baquba offensive that Sunni and Shiite soldiers cooperated with Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias, respectively. Some have even tried to kill American troops. Giving weapons and training to Iraq's security forces in the absence of a national political consensus in Iraq risks inflaming Iraq's conflicts. In fact, the violence has escalated at the same time as the number of trained Iraqi security forces has increased.

Iraq's government has used Iraqi security forces to promote their sectarian interests rather than the national interest. Most troubling is the manner in which the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has used the Iraqi security forces. He has focused primarily on going after Sunni insurgents with Iraqi forces, leaving the impression that he is acting on behalf of Shi'a sectarian interests. Worse still, officials in the prime minister's office have often replaced officers that are perceived as competent and non-sectarian.

Force protection concerns for the United States. The ISG's training recommendation suffers from two more flaws: force protection and time. The number of troops dedicated to protecting American advisors from insurgents would drain resources needed to perform other missions crucial to U.S. interests such as counterterrorism. In addition, many experts observe that it takes years if not decades to train a professional, competent army. Past experiences of unpopular foreign military forces facing an insurgency while training local security forces do not inspire confidence in the success of future efforts. There is no reason to presume we will be able to do any better even if we had unlimited time in Iraq (which we don't).

5. Offering undeveloped ideas on a regional diplomatic offensive.

The ISG proposed creating a regional contact group to help solve Iraq's internal and external problems diplomatically. While it is important for the United States to undertake a diplomatic offensive as it begins a phased redeployment from Iraq, the ISG approach is too broad.

Rather than dealing with Iraq's multiple internal conflicts as discrete problems that require separate attention, the ISG approach could result in a ''one-size-fits-all'' diplomatic package. Progressives should recognize that each of Iraq's neighbors have differing interests in each ofIraq's conflicts, and then advocate that the United States tailor its diplomacy to each conflict in an attempt to deal individually with the myriad problems confronting Iraq.

CONCLUSION

Progressives should not allow the recommendations of the ISG report to be accepted without question. Nor should they allow the White House to legitimate its still-stay-the course policy by paying lip service to the ISG recommendations.

Rather, progressives should advocate a policy that allows us to strategically reset our military forces, our diplomatic personnel, and our intelligence operations by redeploying out troops in 12 months, partitioning our diplomatic effort to better deal with Iraq's multiple conflict, rethinking our approach to Iraq's government and its security

forces, and redirecting our immense national power toward destroying those terrorists who attacked us on 9/11. The time is past for more half-way measures.

The United States needs to move toward a ''Strategic Reset'' of its policy in Iraq and the Middle East, one that recognizes the increasingly fragmented situation on the ground and build a more sustainable approach to advancing long-term U.S. interests in the region.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, as I yield to my friend from Pennsylvania, let me just say, we do have a great chance to work together, that's why we were, in fact, proposing an alternative, that being a chance for us to work on the bipartisan Iraq Study Group recommendations.

With that, I'm happy to yield 4 minutes to my very good friend from Erie, Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH).

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the strongest possible opposition to this rule.

In the panoply of public policy issues, there is no more important question than starting or ending an armed conflict. The decision we make today will determine whether men and women will live or die, not only on the battlefields of Iraq but also potentially in the cities of Europe and America.

The discussion that we conduct today should transcend crass political partnership and narrow ideology to reflect our deepest concern for the Nation and, indeed, for the community of nations.

The House of Representatives today should be prepared to engage in a free and fair debate regarding all of the potential options for the future conduct of combat operations and diplomatic initiatives in Iraq and the broader Middle East. We should be discussing the recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group. We should be examining some of the ideas laid out by Senator LUGAR. We should be considering the suggestion of Congresswoman HEATHER WILSON and I that we made to the President recently encouraging him to convene a high-level summit of Iraqi sectarian leaders. We should exclude no viable alternative, even that offered by my colleague from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

The legislation we will consider later today does have the potential to serve as a starting point of determining a new course of action in Iraq, but it is badly flawed, and it needs substantial improvement, and unfortunately, that will not be possible. The rule the Democrats have laid before the House today demonstrates their motivations are, at core, political. And I remember when politics ended at the water's edge.

They do not offer us an open rule, allowing full and free debate. They don't even allow us a structured rule, permitting, at the very least, discussion of some of the major alternatives that I've outlined.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that certain parties want things from this debate today. They've already recorded their robo calls, purchased airtime for their attack ads. They've scheduled buses for their rent-a-mobs. And the last thing they really desire is a free, open and informed debate that might result in a unified policy regarding our Nation's future efforts in Iraq. They seek not to unite our Nation but to divide it.

The people who bring this rule to the floor today do not allow amendments because they're afraid. They're afraid that some of these amendments might prevail. They're afraid that, given viable alternatives, some Members of their own party will choose cooperation over confrontation.

□ 1100

Mostly, they are afraid they might lose a major issue for their campaign to maintain their majority. Their fear may or may not be justified, but its very existence is a sad commentary on their faith in the Members of their own party, this body, and the American people.

I remind my colleagues that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Reject this cynical rule. Vote ''no'' on the previous question. Let's have a full and fair debate on this, the most critical issue of our generation.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, give me 3 seconds to say that under the Republican administration, not a single Iraqi measure was brought up under an open rule.

And now I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI).

Ms. MATSUI. I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding me time and for her leadership on the Rules Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this rule and in support of the underlying bill. Today presents us with another opportunity to change direction in Iraq, a change that is desperately needed. I have opposed this war from the beginning. I have long supported ways to bring this war to a responsible close. I urge my colleagues to seize this opportunity now before we do further disservice to the brave men and women in Iraq.

The last time I rose in opposition to Iraq policy, I talked about George and Dee Heath from my hometown of Sacramento. All three of their sons served in Iraq. Recently, I learned that one of their sons, David, was hit in an RPG attack on his convoy. Thank goodness he was not wounded gravely, and he will be coming home to recover.

Mr. Speaker, today's vote is about our responsibility to the Heath sons and to the more than 150,000 other men and women in harm's way. They are doing what is being asked of them heroically and patriotically. It fills me with sorrow that more than 3,600 soldiers have paid the ultimate price for their heroism, including 385 from my home State of California.

Our responsibility to them as their elected leaders should be, it must be, to ensure that their mission is clear and achievable. Today, we have the opportunity to fulfill our responsibility as the President has not. Sadly, the President's disastrous leadership is ignoring his duty to the troops. We cannot sit idly by.

The Iraqi Government is not meeting any of its political, economic, or military benchmarks. The President's surge policy has had disastrous results. In fact, 600 troops have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded since he announced this policy.

Our troops are stranded on the front lines without clear guidance and without a clear mission. In light of such inept leadership by the President, the American people have lost their patience. Most Americans support removing troops by April. They want us to refocus on terrorism. Yet, still the President refuses to reconsider. It is clear from the President's blind stubbornness that Congress must show the President the way.

Our troops are at the breaking point. We are refereeing a civil war. The solution is a political one, not a military one. But in this late and crucial hour, you have to do more than talk about change. You have to vote for it. You have to fight for it. Chairman SKELTON's bill keeps the safety of our troops and our Nation's security at the forefront by changing course in Iraq. I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely laughable to listen to the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules, after having berated us for the longest period of time, use us as a model for the procedure around which we are considering this legislation. This is a bill, not a resolution, which is what we brought up in the last Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3¼ minutes to the very distinguished gentleman, a former member of the Rules Committee, from Marietta, Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my former chairman of the Rules Committee, the gentleman from California, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose this rule and condemn the underlying bill, hastily leaving Iraq without any clear exit strategy.

Mr. Speaker, the timing of this legislation should raise some serious questions for the American people. It comes at a critical point in the global war on terror, a point at which our efforts should be focused on defeating terrorism inflicted by Islamic jihadists, not usurping the power of our military commanders, as this bill clearly does.

Today's debate comes on the heels of an intelligence analysis stating al Qaeda has regrouped to a level not seen since 9/11 with a greater ability to strike inside the United States. It comes in the immediate aftermath of the Muslim extremist attacks in London and Glasgow. In sum, it comes at a time when our decisions must be based

on strategic interests and not political grandstanding.

However, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not designed to help us fight terrorism to secure the United States' interests. In fact, its timing has nothing to do with national security at all.

Today, the Democratic leaderships want us to vote on a change of course before we have had the opportunity to fully analyze the President's interim report on our strategy in Iraq, and well ahead of the much anticipated September report to be delivered by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker.

So why are we debating this now? Curiously, it comes at a time when this Democratic Congress has an approval rating as low as 14 percent. That's right, Mr. Speaker, their approval is at an all-time low. Their base, the extremist left, is very angry. They are angry at the Democrats' Out of Iraq Caucus because they failed to deliver. Indeed, Cindy Sheehan, their poster child, has now announced her candidacy against Speaker PELOSI.

So what do the Democrats do? They take another shot at Old Faithful. When all else fails, when they can't get anything accomplished, when all they can deliver to the American public is the most closed Congress in history, they engage in another round of political theater engineered to do nothing but grab a few headlines and appease that liberal base.

Mr. Speaker, let's not waste the time of this body by debating vague bills with absolutely no chance of becoming law. Let's instead examine the upcoming September report from our top military commanders and then, yes, then make informed decisions on the best path forward.

My friend, the distinguished chairwoman of the Rules Committee, the gentlewoman from New York, stated in her opening remarks that if we wait until September, as I suggest, 200 more troops would be lost and the lives of 200 families would be changed forever.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleagues that within a 20-minute period of time on September 11, 2001, 3,000 lives were lost, some of our brightest and best; and, indeed, the lives of 3,000 families were changed forever.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to urge my colleagues to oppose this rule and to oppose the irresponsible underlying bill.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I vigorously opposed the war in Iraq before it began, and now, well into its fifth year, the need for a new policy has never been clearer. The toll of this war has been devastating: more than 3,600 of our most courageous men and women killed, tens of thousands seriously wounded; the toll on civilians much higher still. And while we struggle to fund domestic priorities in Vermont, in all our States across this Nation, health care, a crumbling infrastructure, transportation, the cost of education, we now spend $12 billion every single month on this war.

From last November's elections, to public opinion polls, to the comments I hear from Vermonters every single day, the voice of the American people is loud and it is clear: we must end this war. And since the President refuses, absolutely refuses, to act, Congress must. Since the President refuses, Congress must make it clear that the United States will not maintain permanent military bases in Iraq. Since the President refuses, Congress must denounce the use of torture. It must finally close Guantanamo Bay. And since the President refuses, Congress must bring our troops home and ensure they receive the care they deserve when they return.

Mr. Speaker, 7 months ago, under the leadership of the previous Congress, a bill like this never would have been allowed to come to the floor. Now, 7 months later, today, there is an emerging bipartisan consensus that the President must be forced to change his course.

By passing this bill today, Congress will demonstrate with the force of law what the American people well know: it is time to end the war in Iraq.

I cosponsored and voted in favor of legislation offered by my colleague Mr. MCGOVERN of Massachusetts that called for redeployment of our troops from Iraq within 6 months. I voted against additional funds for the war without a timeline. And I cosponsored legislation that would close Guantanamo Bay, outlaw torture, defend the right of habeas corpus, and prohibit the establishment of permanent military bases.

At the end of the day, Americans know that no action in the House of Representatives is not enough until all of our troops are returned home. This bill provides a starting point for progress towards realizing that goal. Until our troops are home, I will not stop, and Congress must not stop in its efforts to compel the President to end this war.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, let me at this time yield 2 minutes to our friend from Bridgeport, Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), who has made 17 trips to Iraq and unfortunately was denied an opportunity to have us consider and vote on a very thoughtful amendment that he proposed in the Rules Committee last night.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as I walked into this Chamber, Congressman MCGOVERN said we need to work together to bring our troops home. He is right. But the resolution we will be debating today does not allow us to consider bipartisan proposals. There were a number of amendments presented to the Rules Committee, and they rejected all of them.

The gentlewoman from New York, Ms. SLAUGHTER, can say, when Republicans were in control, they didn't do that, they didn't allow bipartisan amendments. That is about the most insignificant and meaningless statement she could make, because Democrats are now in charge, and they are in charge in part because of the war in Iraq and because they promised to be different and have open debate and allow us all to say what we needed to say and from that find consensus.

There are two things I agree on: we need to bring our troops home, and we need a deadline to do that. But this deadline begins in 120 days and concludes by April of next year, guaranteeing absolute failure, laying waste to all the investment we have talked about.

We need to bring our troops home, but not by the deadline that has been offered. It is the only deadline. So when I vote against what I think is a foolish deadline, the media is going to say exactly what my Democratic colleagues want them to say, that we voted against a deadline and that we are not sincere about bringing our troops home.

Give me a deadline I can support, and I will vote for it. Give me an opportunity to at least debate a deadline that I could support.

We are going to bring our troops home because we can't maintain this level of engagement in Iraq without extending troops from 15 months to 18 months. We are not going to allow that to happen. Our troops will be coming home, but not by April. They will be coming home in a more thoughtful way.

I urge defeat of this resolution. In particular, it did not allow for the Wolf amendment, which was the Iraq Study Group proposal. This is what we need to be voting on. We all say that we agree with it and support it. Well, why not bring it to the floor? What are we afraid of?

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, let me have about 2 seconds to say that we have allowed 4 hours of general debate. I think everybody will have an opportunity to discuss what they think of the deadline.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR).

□ 1115

Ms. CASTOR. I thank the distinguished chair of the Rules Committee for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise as a cosponsor of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act under this rule, and urge my colleagues to pass it today, because in this summer of 2007, in the fifth year of the Bush-Cheney war in Iraq, it is imperative that we chart a new direction for our national security and be more strategic in the defense of America.

As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, it is clear to me that the reckless White House policy and now the escalation of the war is undermining our country's readiness and ability to respond to other global

threats to our national security. Indeed, in testimony before our committee, top commanders have testified that America runs a strategic risk by staying on the same course in Iraq.

The generals confirm that because our personnel and equipment are tied up in Iraq, our ability to handle future threats and contingencies is reduced. In my State of Florida, for example, the National Guard does not have all of the equipment it needs to train and deploy soldiers. They are only 28 percent equipped. In effect, President Bush's war in Iraq is impairing our country's ability to prepare for any other threat to our national security.

Florida also feels the pinch of multiple deployments because, time and again, our brave men and women are being asked to go back, to leave their families, leave their jobs, return to the field of battle after inadequate rest at home. Florida currently has the second highest number of troops out of the 50 States deployed in Iraq, over 23,000. And 172 Floridians have been killed and over 1,200 have been wounded since military operations began there over 4 years ago. Hardly a week goes by that my office is not contacted and informed of another sad but heroic death in this cause. In fact, last week, two more Tampa Bay area brave, heroic soldiers were killed by IEDs.

People ask me, why are our young American men and women refereeing the ongoing Shiite-Sunni civil war? American troops cannot resolve the Iraqi sectarian and religious conflict; only Iraqis can find the political resolution required to stabilize Iraq. America has now spent over $450 billion in Iraq. When will the Iraqi government take responsibility for the future of their country?

President Bush's war in Iraq has been very costly. Over $10 billion a month now, costly not just in terms of degradation of our Nation's readiness, the waste and fraud due to the lack of oversight, but President Bush is sacrificing the health care of our children and our seniors and investments in our towns and neighborhoods while continuing this war without end.

So after 4 years of war and over 3,500 American lives, and the Bush-Cheney failure to aggressively pursue a political solution, we demand a new direction and a comprehensive strategy for our great Nation.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON).

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, for 4 long years our country has endured a tragic war, a treacherous journey down a dark and winding path, with no clear routes, no clear destination and fatal hazards lurking around every blind corner.

Today I rise again with Chairman SKELTON and my colleagues to act to clear the road ahead, to bring its end into the light. I rise again to push, to prod, to urge my colleagues to help us end the President's failed policy; to help us change the mission to a mission based in reality; to help us end the ravages that our brave soldiers who have performed so heroically, remove them from the crossfire in which they are caught, to remove them from the snipers' bullets and the life-ending IEDs.

I rise with the hope that those who have stood with the President and have given his Iraq policy a chance to succeed and another chance to succeed and another chance to succeed, that they will today choose a responsible change in direction based in reality that will establish a comprehensive and clear strategy for our role in Iraq.

Congress has allowed the President to lead our troops down this path for too long. It is time to demand accountability, to demand an exit strategy that is clear, and to demand an end to the injury and death that our brave soldiers face every day as they courageously proceed down this undefined road on which the President has placed them and they have dutifully traveled.

The President's ambling course has led our troops through the deadliest 3 months of the war in April, May and June of this year. During those three deadly months, 329 American soldiers died in Iraq. The cost of continuing down this path is too great. We must act to bring direction and accountability to the United States' mission for the sake of our troops and the families that love and support them.

It brings me great sadness to report that, since the war began in the spring of 2003, 163 brave men and women from Ohio have been killed. And 25 of those precious lives have been lost since the surge. The President's escalation of this war means six more grieving families in Ohio since when I last spoke in favor of the redeployment bill in May of this year. How many more times will we come to this floor to demand responsibility and accountability from our President? How many more families will be devastated by the loss of a loved one? How many more times will we hear the administration continue to argue that we are, quote, ''just about to make progress''?

Last November, the people of the 13th District of Ohio made their voices heard when they went to the polls. Their voices joined with the voices of people across this Nation. They voted for a change in direction, and today we act to give it to them.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am happy to yield 2 minutes to one of the most respected Members of this House on intelligence and defense matters, the gentlewoman from Albuquerque, New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON).

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I want to let my colleagues know that I will be asking for a recorded vote on the previous question on this rule.

We have a problem, a very serious problem that we must address before the House adjourns in August, and this resolution which we have done before does not deal with the real issues that this House must address because of the threat that we face.

If the previous question is defeated, I will offer an amendment to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that clarifies one very simple and critical thing, that the United States Government will no longer be required to get a warrant to listen to terrorists who are not in the United States.

The Director of National Intelligence has testified to us, as has the director of the CIA, that their hands are currently tied. They are being tied up, requiring warrants with probable cause, to listen to people who are terrorists who are not even in the United States because of the way the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is written.

We cannot allow ourselves to be deaf and blind because of a law that is woefully outdated. All of us have heard what the Department of Homeland Security has said, the chatter is at levels we have not seen since the summer of 2001. And the Director of National Intelligence has testified we are missing significant portions of intelligence. We have to open our ears and open our eyes to keep this Nation safe. That is the critical issue we should be debating here today. And if we defeat the previous question, I will immediately offer that for the consideration of the House.

Mr. WELCH of Vermont. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. HARMAN).

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I would point out to our colleagues that the action just described in my view is not necessary.

I rise in support of the rule, the underlying bill, and in strong support for ending our combat mission in Iraq and redirecting our efforts towards stability in the region, including Iraq, but also in trouble spots like Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Let me make three points.

First, based on firsthand experience from my fourth visit to Iraq just weeks ago, Baghdad is not safer. True, we have worked successfully with tribal leaders against al Qaeda in Anbar Province, but the major population center, Baghdad, the focus of our military surge, is not turning around. Progress will not be made by a continuation of our combat mission.

Second, the Skelton bill mirrors a companion bill in the other body which has impressive bipartisan support. I urge Republicans to support this measure, and know that some will do so.

The message our constituents want to hear is that 290 of us, a veto-proof bipartisan majority, insist on a responsible end to our combat mission in Iraq beginning now with passage of this bill.

Third, though I feel Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff's use of the words ''gut feeling'' was unwise, I share

the view that our country could be attacked at any time. Al Qaeda has regrouped in Pakistan and expanded its reach throughout North Africa. Homegrown cells in England and elsewhere are increasing, and our assumption must be that they are here as well.

Low-tech, low-scale vehicle-borne attacks are, sadly, not hard to execute. At a minimum, those, and attacks on soft targets like our mass transit systems, may be in our near future.

DHS, FBI and our exceptionally talented local police departments are working overtime, though their ranks are depleted and their equipment and they are surged in Iraq. But 100 percent protection is impossible.

Mr. Speaker, this is where our attention must be, and our resources. Pass the Skelton bill.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am happy to yield 4 minutes to my friend from Holland, Michigan, the former chairman, now the ranking member of the Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, later on, my colleague from California will make a motion to defeat the previous question, as the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON) indicated. That will then enable us to address a very serious issue, the problem that, right now, we are blind and deaf to people who may want to attack the United States.

As Secretary Chertoff indicated earlier this week, all of the indications are that we still remain very, very vulnerable. The chatter, the signals, indicate more clearly that America is still at risk. And it is not only the chatter. All you really need to do is take a look at what al Qaeda says. They are clear on their intent to attack the United States again.

Take a look at what happened in the U.K. 2 weeks ago. Planned attacks in the heart of London, a planned attack at an airport indicate that al Qaeda and radical jihadists want to attack the U.K.; they want to attack in Europe, and they want to attack us in the United States.

One of the things that needs to be clear is that what has helped keep us safe is our intelligence community. And as our ability to gain information has changed and adapted over the last couple of years, it has become even more clear that FISA needs to be updated, and FISA needs to be updated now. It needs to be done before we go home in August because if we expect to stay safe, we need to make sure that our intelligence community has all of the tools at its disposal to identify risks, to identify potential terrorists and to identify individuals who want to do us harm.

FISA should not be used to protect international terrorists. It should not be used to protect radical jihadists. It should not be used as a screen to protect members of al Qaeda. Remember, FISA was designed in the 1970s, designed to handle a Cold War surveillance of countries like the Soviet Union. Back then and into the 1980s and early 1990s, our intelligence community only needed to be one step faster than the former Soviet Union. We didn't have to be that fast. And the risks and the threats were not as real or as immediate to our homeland as what they are today.

Today our intelligence community needs to be one, two, three steps faster than radical jihadists, radical jihadists who use technology and who use the Internet and who use the communications world of today to drive their message and to plan their attacks. We need to be able to penetrate into it and penetrate into it very effectively.

□ 1130

Now is the time to modernize FISA. Now is the time to make sure that the intelligence community has the capability to identify the threats and the individuals who may want to attack the United States and make sure that they are in a position to identify these threats and get this information to our law enforcement individuals in the United States in a seamless way.

We've made progress in a number of areas in intelligence reform. There's still much work to do, but one of the areas that we have not done is update FISA.

Defeat the previous question and allow for the modernization of FISA now.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LOEBSACK).

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today it was reported that al Qaeda is as strong now as it was prior to the 9/11 attacks. Meanwhile, our troops who have served with honor and distinction are mired in the middle of a religious civil war in Iraq. The men and women of Iowa's National Guard have faced multiple redeployments at great sacrifice to them and their families.

The American people continue to demand a new way forward in Iraq. Even Members of the President's own party are demanding change. We must immediately begin to chart a new course.

I'm a cosponsor of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act because it provides for the safe withdrawal of combat troops by April 1, 2008. We must bring home our troops safely and responsibly. We must also redirect our efforts against terrorism.

This bill represents a step forward, and I urge its passage and the rule.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire of my very good friend from Rochester, New York, the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules, how many speakers she has remaining.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I have two.

Mr. DREIER. With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS).

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from New York for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the rule and also the underlying bill, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. We can't afford to spend $10 billion a month on this failed war and continue to see the loss of lives, 3,600 now. From my district alone, 14 individuals have not come home to see their families. 27,000 have come home injured from the war.

I want to tell you that in March I had the opportunity to visit some of our troops in Iraq, many from California representing southern California's San Gabriel Valley. Many of them told me they did not have appropriate equipment, that they were there for an insurmountable time, many on their second, third and fourth tour. One family member from the City of Azusa told me that he had not even seen his child. It had been already 14 months.

I would ask Members of Congress to remember who our constituents are. I have the adjoining district next to Congressman DREIER. In my district alone, 4–1 in a survey said, Republican and Democrat, we want the Congress to get us out of the war.

I ask for support of our bill and the rule.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, we were reassured that ''progress'' was being made in Iraq 500 deaths ago, 1,000 deaths ago, 2,000 deaths ago, and 3,000 deaths ago.

Like the boy who cried wolf, this President cries ''progress.'' What progress?

With all this talk about benchmarks, I think it's time to get off the bench and bring our troops home now, with an immediate, responsible, and safe redeployment.

President Bush says as we approach five years of being in Iraq, he says ''listen to the generals.''

Well, we've listened to them, and his top general says if we followed his course, if we stay his course, we'll be in Iraq fighting for another five to ten years.

Real progress would begin by adopting today's very modest proposal and moving forward united so that our troops are not caught up in a final disastrous position in Iraq, and that we responsibly redeploy to protect our families, rather than generating one generation after another of jihadists.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I have no more requests for time and ask if the gentleman has more requests.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close the debate now, so I yield myself the balance of the time.

Mr. Speaker, let me just begin by talking about procedure. We continue

to hear the distinguished Chair of the Committee on Rules talk regularly about an open amendment process, and I will say with absolute certainty, I had the privilege of chairing the Rules Committee for 8 years, and I will tell you that we have brought more rules to the floor of this House under a completely closed process during the first 7 months of this year than we did during any 7 months during the 8 years that I was privileged to serve as chairman of the Rules Committee. So much for a new and open process.

Now, let's look at what it is we're considering here, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know full well that this is a bill, unlike resolutions that may have been brought up under closed rules in the past, this is actually a bill, a bill that's scheduled to go to the President's desk. Everyone knows that this bill is not going to become law.

What we've found is gross politicization once again, a commitment made that every week we're going to have some kind of vote on Iraq.

We all know that the war in Iraq is very unpopular. We know that the President is a great punching bag on this for virtually everyone, but the fact of the matter is we are in the midst of a very important global war on terror, and as the President said in the past, you know, we all like to be loved, but I'd much rather be right than be loved.

The fact of the matter is, we want to bring this war to an end. The President stood right here in this chamber in January and said I wish that this war were over and that we had won, but we need to ensure victory. And, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we are not given the opportunity to consider any thoughtful, bipartisan alternative to this measure which calls for the withdrawal to begin within 120 days. I mean, how crazy is that when we're looking for a report to come in September and as we are looking at success that has begun even after only 1 month, 1 month of this plan having been put into place under the greatly heralded General David Petraeus?

Now, Mr. Speaker, as my friends from New Mexico and Michigan have said, I'm going to move to defeat the previous question. I'm going to move to defeat the previous question so that we can actually ensure that we have the tools to win this war on terror. We've had a number of anniversaries marked. We've spent a lot of time talking about them, but we fail to remember the success that we've had at preempting attacks on this country.

Just last month, we marked the first anniversary of the discovery of the proposed attack on the Sears Tower and the FBI headquarters in Miami.

Just last week, we marked the first anniversary of the proposed attack on the plan to blow up the Hudson River tunnel between New Jersey and Manhattan.

Just in May, we had a report of the plan, as you all know, to see some of these people go in and start killing our people at Fort Dix in New Jersey.

And then of course, just a few weeks ago, we had the plan to blow up JFK International Airport.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been able to discover those, but we know full well from those in our intelligence operations and the Department of Homeland Security that we are, as Mr. HOEKSTRA said, blind and deaf, and I believe that we need to make sure we defeat the previous question so that we'll be in a position to amend this proposal so that we can ensure that we have the tools necessary to win this war on terror.

So vote ''no'' on the previous question.

AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 583 OFFERED BY MR. DRIER OF CALIFORNIA

Strike all after the resolved clause and insert the following:

That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 2956) to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, and for other purposes. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. The bill shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) four hours of debate, with three hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; (2) the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in section 3 of this resolution, if offered by the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Hoekstra, or his designee, which shall be in order without intervention of any point of order except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI, shall be considered as read, and shall be separately debatable for two hours equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent; and (3) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration of H.R. 2956 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

SEC. 3. The amendment in the nature of a substitute to be offered by Mr. Hoekstra of Michigan, or his designee, referred to in section 1 is as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

Subsection (f) of section 101 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801) is amended to read as follows—

''(f) 'Electronic surveillance' means—

''(1) the installation or use of an electronic, mechanical, or other surveillance device for acquiring information by intentionally directing surveillance at a particular known person who is reasonably believed to be in the United States under circumstances in which that person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes; or

''(2) the intentional acquisition of the contents of any communication under circumstances in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes, if both the sender and all intended recipients are reasonably believed to be located within the United States.''

COMPARISON OF 110TH TO 109TH TYPES OF AMENDMENT PROCESSES FOR BILL CONSIDERED BY THE HOUSE THROUGH JULY 12, 2005 (EXCLUDING MEASURES CONSIDERED BY SUSPENSION OR UC) CURRENT AS OF JULY 12, 2007

109th—Through July 12, 2005		110th—To date	
	Percent		Percent
Open: 12 (including approps)	27.3	6 (including approps)	9.4
Modified Open: 0	0	7	10.95
Structured: 21	47.7	25	39
Closed: 11	25	26	40.6
Total: 44	100	64	100
Open: 12 (including approps)	27.3	6 (including approps)	9.4
Restrictive: 32	72.7	58	90.6
Total: 44	100	64	100

*Prepared by the Committee on Rules Republican Staff.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, once again, we're always treated to the inventive memory of the former Chair of the Rules Committee.

Let me just state for the record that this time last when he was Chair, we had three open rules. At this time, we've had eight open rules.

I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and also on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on ordering the previous question will be followed by 5-minute votes on adoption of H. Res. 533, if ordered; and approval of the Journal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 225, noes 197, not voting 9, as follows:

[Roll No. 620]

AYES—225

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOES—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—9

Berkley
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Jordan
Kucinich
Stark
Tancredo
Young (AK)

□ 1204

Mr. GRAVES changed his vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated against:

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I was absent from the House floor during today's rollcall vote on ordering the previous question on the rule, H. Res. 533, for H.R. 2956.

Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 221, nays 196, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 621]

YEAS—221

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—196

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess

Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sestak
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—14

Berkley
Cole (OK)
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Kucinich
Lewis (CA)
Musgrave
Pickering
Saxton
Stark
Tancredo
Wilson (OH)
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain for this vote.

□ 1210

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 240, nays 178, answered ''present'' 1, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 622]

YEAS—240

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Allen
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Baker
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bono
Boozman
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castle
Castor
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doolittle
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Fortenberry
Frank (MA)
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Goodlatte
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Kingston
Klein (FL)
Kuhl (NY)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mack
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McMorris Rodgers
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Paul
Payne
Petri
Pickering
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Rehberg
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sessions
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Sires
Skelton
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Spratt
Stark
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tierney
Towns
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walsh (NY)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Woolsey
Wynn

NAYS—178

Altmire
Bachus
Baird
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Boren
Boustany
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carney
Carter
Chabot
Chandler
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cramer
Cuellar
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Donnelly
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Ellsworth
English (PA)
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gingrey
Goode
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Kagen
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
LaHood
Lamborn
Larsen (WA)
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mahoney (FL)
Manzullo
Marchant
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moore (KS)
Moran (KS)
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pastor
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Reichert
Renzi
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Shadegg
Shays
Shuler
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Space
Stearns
Stupak
Sullivan
Thompson (CA)
Tiberi
Turner
Udall (CO)
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walz (MN)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wolf
Wu
Yarmuth
Young (FL)

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—1

Gohmert

NOT VOTING—12

Berkley
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Kucinich
Marshall
McNerney
Murphy, Tim
Simpson
Slaughter
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1217

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

RESPONSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT FROM IRAQ ACT

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 533, I call up the bill (H.R. 2956) to require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces in Iraq to a limited presence by April 1, 2008, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2956

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act''.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107–243), enacted into law on October 16, 2002, authorized the President to use the Armed Forces as the President determined necessary and appropriate in order to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by the Government of Iraq at that time;

(2) the Government of Iraq which was in power at the time the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 was enacted into law has been removed from power and its leader indicted, tried, convicted, and executed by the new freely-elected democratic Government of Iraq;

(3) the current Government of Iraq does not pose a threat to the United States or its interests; and

(4) after more than four years of valiant efforts by members of the Armed Forces and United States civilians, the Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future course.

SEC. 3. REQUIREMENT TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ AND TRANSITION TO A LIMITED PRESENCE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN IRAQ.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq beginning not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall complete the reduction and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq by not later than April 1, 2008.

(b) REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TO BE CARRIED OUT IN A SAFE AND ORDERLY MANNER.—The reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq required by subsection (a) shall be implemented in a safe and orderly manner, with maximum attention paid to protection of the Armed Forces that are being redeployed from Iraq.

(c) REDUCTION AND TRANSITION TO FURTHER COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY.—The reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq required by subsection (a) shall further be implemented as part of the comprehensive United States strategy for Iraq required by section 4 of this Act.

SEC. 4. COMPREHENSIVE UNITED STATES STRATEGY FOR IRAQ.

(a) STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than January 1, 2008, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive United States strategy for Iraq.

(b) MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED.—The strategy required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A discussion of United States national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region and the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

(2) A justification of the minimum force levels required to protect United States national security interests in Iraq after April 1, 2008, including a description of the specific missions of the Armed Forces to be undertaken. The justification shall include—

(A) the projected number of Armed Forces necessary to carry out the missions;

(B) the projected annual cost of the missions; and

(C) the expected duration of the missions.

(3) As part of the justification required by paragraph (2), the President shall, at a minimum, address whether it is necessary for the Armed Forces to carry out the following missions:

(A) Protecting United States diplomatic facilities and United States citizens, including members of the Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions.

(B) Serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions.

(C) Engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al-Qaeda and its affiliated organizations in Iraq.

(D) Training and equipping members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

(4) Specific plans for diplomatic initiatives to engage United States allies and others in the region to bring stability to Iraq.

(c) UPDATE OF STRATEGY.—Not later than July 1, 2008, and every 90 days thereafter, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees an update of the strategy required by subsection (a), including a description of the number of Armed Forces deployed to Iraq and the missions for which such Armed Forces are so deployed.

(d) FORM.—The strategy required by subsection (a) and each update of the strategy required by subsection (c) shall be transmitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex, if necessary.

(e) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

SEC. 5. ARMED FORCES DEFINED.

In this Act, the term ''Armed Forces'' has the meaning given the term in section 101 of title 10, United States Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARDOZA). Pursuant to House Resolution 533, debate shall not exceed 4 hours, with 3 hours equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Armed Services and 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) each will control 90 minutes, and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. Speaker, out of all of this Iraq business, there's one star, and that star, as every American should know and appreciate, is the young American in uniform. That is the purpose of this legislation, and I take this opportunity to compliment those who serve our country wherever they may be, those in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world or here within our United States. I'm proud of them. And they are our stars.

Mr. Speaker, we have been engaged in Iraq since March of 2003. And in hearing discussion on the rule, it's obvious that some people wish to confuse the effort in Afghanistan with the effort in Iraq. They are separate and distinct.

The war in Afghanistan is something that we needed to do. The Taliban government gave sanctuary to the al Qaeda terrorists in that country of Afghanistan, and we did the right thing by going in there.

The war in Iraq is one of choice. There have been discussions and difficulty and debate over how we got there, but we are there. But people should know that the insurgency in Iraq and the subsequent sectarian violence between the Shiite and Sunni is a different and distinct war from that in Afghanistan.

You know, in history, we learn from the past. Strategic mistakes have been made, and we're supposed to learn from that. And we have to go to our revolution in 1776, when the British General Howell did not follow up his victories against George Washington's troops on Long Island. Consequently, George Washington's troops were able to encamp at Valley Forge and later attack successfully Trenton and New Jersey. That was a strategic mistake that allowed our revolution to be successful.

Lee's invasion of the north, the battles of Antietam and Gettysburg, were strategic mistakes of the Confederacy.

And, Mr. Speaker, sadly, we have seen not only strategic mistakes in Iraq, we have seen irretrievable strategic mistakes; no plan for the aftermath, the initial victory, the number of troops was not as General Shinseki recommended, far too few; the unguarded caches of weapons and ammunition, allowing the insurgency to have free access to them; the dismissal of the Iraqi Army, rather than giving them a pay check and a shovel, the closing of the Iraqi industries, the deBaathification, which put thousands of people out of work, including thousands of school teachers. These irretrievable mistakes made it very difficult for us to have any sort of positive success in that country.

We hear the call, well, wait until September. There'll be another report. Well, we have been in Iraq for four Septembers. There is the old song that those of us with a little gray in our hair remember as the September song. And one line from that song of yesteryear, ''we haven't got time for the waiting game.'' That's where we are now. We don't have time for the waiting game.

The purpose of this is a matter of readiness. It's a matter of national security. It's a matter that we must face now, or else the strain and stretch on our ground forces, particularly the Army and, of course, the Marines, will be beyond repair for many, many years.

It's a matter of strategic importance that we redeploy from Iraq in a responsible manner, and that's what this bill does. And we are able to keep our forces strong.

We never know what's going to happen. The last 30 years, we've had 12 military contingencies in which our Armed Forces have been engaged, four

of which have been major in size; none of them predictable. We don't know what the future holds. But for national security interests, we need to have a ready force, particularly our ground forces, which are being strained so very much now.

Further, it is important that we pass the security of Iraq over to the Iraqi government and to the security forces of that country. We cannot hold their hand forever. They must step up to the plate and take over their own security. It's important that that happen.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, initially sets forth a sense of Congress that the authorization for use of military force against Iraq was enacted into law in October of 2002, and that the government of Iraq that was in power at that time has been removed and it's leader tried, convicted and executed by a freely elected government of Iraq; and further, that the government of Iraq, the current government of Iraq does not pose a threat to the United States, and for more than 4 years, the efforts of our Armed Forces have been valiant in their work and in their combat in that country.

We need a responsible redeployment. This legislation gives it to us. It states that the Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of armed forces in that country beginning not later than 120 days after the date of enactment. It also states that such redeployment shall be complete to a limited presence which is spelled out in the bill, not later than April 1, 2008.

The question before us, are we, as a country, any safer now than we were when we went into Iraq in March of 2003? What has it done for the security of our country?

We see the sectarian violence, on top of the insurgency, the insurgency being aided by foreign fighters, many of them al Qaeda, and consequently, we know that the end must be done by the Iraqi security forces. That's what we are trying to do in this legislation; responsible redeployment of the American forces, cause the Iraqi troops and forces to take over their own security, and restore the readiness to our ground forces here in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1230

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, following my remarks and Mr. SKELTON's remarks, I understand we are going to yield to the Foreign Affairs Committee, and I would yield an additional 15 minutes of my time to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and also I would yield 30 minutes of my time to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SHADEGG) and that he may be allowed to yield time in turn.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, time may be so controlled.

There was no objection.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, I want to express my great respect for my colleague, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, a partner on many, many legislative endeavors and a gentleman who really has the welfare of the troops of the United States in his heart when he speaks and when he legislates.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me say this about this piece of legislation which has been brought by the Democrat leadership before this House. This is an attempt once again to stampede a retreat from Iraq, and it is a gratuitous attempt to do this. There is no reason, only 3½ weeks after the surge of troops has been put in place, to now race for the borders, to demand that the President start to wind up this operation and start to leave, especially when General Petraeus will be making recommendations to us on September 15. There is no reason to do this. And I am reminded of when the surge was first announced and I was on the floor in a discussion with a good colleague from the Democrat side, the day after the surge had been announced when only a few people were even in country from this increase in forces, and she said, There has been a car bombing and that proves the surge doesn't work. And she was ready to immediately start a retreat from the country, and I take it a number of folks on that side of the aisle were willing to do that.

There is no reason to do this. We have an interim report which has just come out. The interim report says that in the 18 areas of interest in which progress has to be registered, there has been progress on eight of them, there has been unsatisfactory progress on eight of them, and on two of them it is too early to really make an evaluation. Well, that is the interim report. And on September 15 we will get a further report.

And as I look at the important things, the things that to me are important in this report, one thing that is very important is the fact that when we needed to get the three additional brigades and that additional troop strength into Baghdad from the Iraqi Army, we got them there. Even though they didn't show up early on 1½ years ago, this time they showed up. Mr. Maliki was good on his commitment. They got there. So things that were important to me with respect to this report are being accomplished.

But the facts are we are only 27 days into this surge. And the Democrat resolution really spells out no plan whatsoever. It asks the President to come up with yet another plan, which is highly interesting since he has a plan and since General Petraeus has stated that he will recommend adjustments on September 15. So if there are adjustments to make to the plan, they should come after General Petraeus appears before us and gives us his recommended adjustments.

So what are we doing here? Well, what we are really doing is counting votes. This is basically an attempt by the Democrat leadership to get a hard vote count, see if any more people have slipped, if there are any more votes on their side of the aisle so that they will be able to tee this thing up and have another vote, hopefully, from their perspective, to forward their goal, which is to start a retreat from Iraq as soon as possible.

There is not a single recommendation in the resolution that is offered by my good friend. There is no recommendation for a new strategy. There is simply a series of questions asked of the administration, and those questions can all best be answered when General Petraeus comes before us.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are two messages that I see coming from Iraq; and we all see in this very complex, very difficult mission lots of messages. A message I saw the other day came from a senior Marine leader. Do you know what it said? It said, ''We are crushing the enemy in Anbar.'' And then a few minutes later, I saw a message from the Democrat leadership that said, ''We have to get out now.'' I have seen the Democrat leadership many times say, We are going to end this war. Mr. Speaker, they don't have the ability to end this war. No American has the ability to end this war. What they do have if they gain enough power is only the ability to leave this battlefield.

Let's not stampede for the border, Mr. Speaker. This is not a time to make a precipitous decision to start ordering the President on a policy that is going to be reported on on September 15. Let's keep our stability. Let's make sure that we don't pass this gratuitous piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, which really is nothing more than a vote count for the Democrat leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation and yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, in Iraq today a misguided war is raging in our country's name. We in this Congress and the American people across the country are filled with admiration for the heroism and sacrifice of our soldiers on the battlefield. But we cannot fathom the mindless stubbornness of the administration fixated on illusory aids. It is pathologically preoccupied with pursuing that despite all the evidence of how destructive the situation has become.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this movie before, quite literally, as any classic film buff knows: ''The Bridge on the River Kwai,'' an Academy Award-winning tale based on real events in World War II. Alec Guinness plays a British colonel mesmerized and hypnotized by the goal of building a bridge that will last through the ages even though doing so will only strengthen the enemy. For a while Alec Guinness persuades his fellow prisoners of war that completing his weird project will leave a legacy of which they can be proud.

But it soon becomes clear that the real goal is to build a monument to himself as he looks back on his few true achievements in life.

At one point this antihero tells his men, We can teach these barbarians a lesson in Western methods and efficiency that will put them to shame. Mr. Speaker, at this point the audience knows where the real shame lies.

The American people know that what happens by our hand in Iraq will be our legacy. We are no longer willing to tolerate keeping our sons and daughters in the midst of a sectarian civil war. The war in Iraq was launched by an administration using faulty intelligence and mesmerized by a dream of some sort of monument to democracy in the Middle East with Iraq at its center. It is past time to stop enabling the construction of this folly.

The legislation before us directs that the redeployment of U.S. forces in Iraq be carried out in a safe and orderly manner. It sets a time certain by which that should start, and it is clearly intended to bring about a major reduction in our troop presence by April of next year. And in the meantime, our legislation will compel the administration to come up with something which amazingly enough to date it hasn't had: a comprehensive strategy for Iraq addressing our national security interests not only there but in the entire region and the ways to maintain our interests even as this redeployment is carried out.

Mr. Speaker, today the administration issued its interim report on the troop escalation in Iraq. Though the White House chooses to focus on the benchmarks that have been met in what it calls a ''satisfactory'' way, the assessment, in fact, shows that Iraq has made unsatisfactory progress on half of the 18 political and military goals that Congress set for Iraq this spring.

The people of Iraq and our fighting forces there know the situation all too well. The index of progress that they face each day tells them much more than a 25-page report can ever say. With every car bomb that takes a civilian toll, every insurgent's bullet that finds its mark, every roadside explosive that maims or kills one of our own brave men and women in uniform, the sacrifices mount; and the result is anything but satisfactory.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, our measure deserves our full and unwavering support. We need to direct a misguided administration to face reality and to start the responsible redeployment of our forces from Iraq. By asking this Congress to extend our patience yet again, by pointlessly risking our troops, and by continuing to ignore the will of the American people to end this war, the administration is reaching for a bridge much too far.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this bill, which seeks to impose a strategy of defeat on our Armed Forces and our country. By binding our military and our foreign policy in a straitjacket, this legislation would accomplish what thousands of our enemies have sought: to force the United States to retreat from Iraq without a plan for victory.

Proponents of rapid withdrawal would like us to ignore the reality that Iraq is but one of the critical battlefields in an ongoing war against Islamic jihadists, against global terrorism, a war declared by the jihadists and which saw its beginnings in November 1979, when Iranian radicals stormed our embassy, took Americans hostages, and held them captive for 444 days.

From there Americans, Westerners, innocent human beings were targeted. Where and when were they targeted? In the bombings of the Marine barracks in the U.S. embassy in Beirut in 1983, in the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993, in the bombings of the Khobar Towers in 1996, in the attacks of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and in the attacks on the USS *Cole* in the year 2000.

Proponents of rapid withdrawal want us to look at the bombings in Iraq in a vacuum, disregarding the similarities to the suicide bombers that have killed scores of innocent Israelis, those who planned and carried out the bombings in London, in Madrid, in Bali that claimed so many innocent lives.

□ 1245

These may not be the exact individuals, nor the same groups, but they are part of a global terrorist network working toward the same end, to destroy and to attack us and our allies.

The Islamic jihadists will not stop their agenda of destruction simply because we quickly withdraw from Iraq. They will, perhaps, stop when they see our nations, our cities, our communities burning, just as the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon burned on that terrible day of September 11, 2001.

They have clearly articulated their goals, listen to their words; al Qaeda's second in command, Al Zawahiri, made it clear in May of this year, and I quote him: ''The empire of evil, the United States, is about to end and a new dawn is about to break over mankind, which will be liberated from the caesars of the White House and Europe and from the Zionists.''

Those seeking to impose an immediate withdrawal deadline are so intent on rushing through this legislation that they appear to have failed to consider the consequences of a U.S. national security interest of what euphemistically is being called a ''phased redeployment.''

How is the strategy of quick withdrawal different from the strategy outlined by Al Zawahiri in a letter that he sent to al Qaeda operatives about driving the U.S. out of Iraq? How would we prevent the development of Iraq into a full base of operations for al Qaeda and other terrorist networks? We pretend to be armchair generals, seeking to undermine the strategies called for by our commanders on the field. But we should not.

Some label the current strategy of failure long before this full complement of units had been, in fact, deployed. But those doing the fighting in Iraq know that we have not failed, patriots such as the Parsons brothers from my congressional district.

Huber Parsons was serving his third deployment in Iraq, this time with the Army Stryker Brigade, when his vehicle was struck by a deep buried IED just a few months ago. His driver was killed, and Huber had to undergo a number of surgeries. I had the honor of visiting him often at Walter Reed. He is pictured here saluting his fallen brothers-in-arms at a memorial service in Fort Lewis, Washington. His twin, Bill, and his younger brother, Charlie, are both currently serving in Iraq, also with the Army Stryker Brigade. They, like my stepson, Doug, and my daughter-in-law, Lindsay, and so many others who are currently deployed in Iraq, are disheartened when they hear the references to failure and consider that the talks of this rapid withdrawal shows a lack of confidence in their ability to defeat the enemy.

Many patriots ask me why the Congress would endanger them and their fellow service men and women by having them engage the enemy with an immediately reduced force. Where, in a region of jihadists, are troops to be deployed to? What Middle Eastern government would want to host a retreating and defeated American Army? How does withdrawal to Kuwait or Qatar, as some have proposed, help us fight al Qaeda in Iraq? If al Qaeda strategies worked in Iraq and forced an American retreat, how can we not conclude that they will also pursue them in Kuwait and Qatar and beyond?

Mr. Speaker, George Orwell said that the quickest way of ending a war is to lose it. We should be discussing strategies for victory, not how to ensure our own defeat.

And let me close, Mr. Speaker, by reading the words of General Petraeus in an interview just a few days ago word for word. He said, ''I can think of few commanders in history who wouldn't have wanted more troops, more time or more unity among their partners. However, if I could only have one at this point in Iraq, it would be more time. This is an exceedingly tough endeavor that faces countless challenges.'' General Petraeus continues, None of us, Iraqi or American, are anything but impatient and frustrated at where we are. But there are no shortcuts. Success in an endeavor like this is the result of steady, unremittent pressure over the long haul. It is a test of wills, demanding patience, determination and stamina from all involved.

General Petraeus, as we know, was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate to be our commander in Iraq, yet somehow we have become better war commanders than General Petraeus.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. WEXLER of Florida.

Mr. WEXLER. Thank you, Mr. LANTOS.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush stubbornly refuses to end the war in Iraq. It is up to Congress to step forward and mandate that our troops return home. Congress must deliver to the American people what they voted for in November. It is Congress that must end this disastrous war. At long last, this legislation delivers a responsible withdrawal of American troops.

The stark reality is that the President's escalation strategy has been an utter failure. Instead of a successful surge, the President's policy in Iraq has regressed, and the death toll of American troops and Iraqi civilians has mounted.

This President is unwilling to change course, despite overwhelming American opposition to the war, despite failing to meet political, economic and security benchmarks, and despite calls by Senate Republicans urging a change in course. The President is in denial, and it is time for Congress to deliver a reality check.

Our troops have sacrificed enough. Our military families have suffered enough. American taxpayers have spent enough. Congress must bring our troops home, and this bill does it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE).

Mr. COBLE. I thank the gentlelady from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against the surge. And for 2½ years, I have said that we need to keep the troop withdrawal issue on the table, but I have also said during that time that the date for withdrawal should be reserved for the commanders on the ground.

The bill before us was not introduced until yesterday, and in my opinion, it is vague, at best; generously laced again, in my opinion, with politics.

I excel at an understatement, Mr. Speaker, when I declare that this war has been mismanaged. It was appropriate to remove Saddam, an international terrorist, but there was never, in my opinion, a post-entry strategy; therefore, mismanagement.

The Iraq issue, Mr. Speaker, is neither as favorable as its proponents contend, nor as unfavorable as its opponents profess. The good news is the evil-driven terrorists have not attacked us again. And I am confident that many moderate Muslims do not embrace the useless killing and destruction of property that has occurred in Iraq, but their silent vocal opposition has been disappointing, at best. The Iraqi Government has been disappointing as well, and we need to insist upon more compliance it seems to me.

But given all the facts surrounding this matter, Mr. Speaker, I believe this Chamber is well-advised to wait until September. We're told that the general will be here in September to report what, if any, favorable or unfavorable results have occurred since the surge, and I believe that is our best policy today.

The cost has been enormous, as has been said, and we would be remiss if we tried to deny that. But I think the right vote is against this proposal today, and then let's revisit it subsequently when the general comes before us in September.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Ambassador DIANE WATSON of California.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you very much, Chairman LANTOS. And thank you, Chairman SKELTON, for crafting this resolution and giving us the opportunity to discuss the war. And I want to thank our Speaker, NANCY PELOSI, who has been steadfast in moving this Congress and this country towards an honorable exit from our occupation of Iraq.

We are now 6 months into President Bush's vaunted escalation of the war in Iraq, and we are not seeing progress. Recently, the Washington Post reported that U.S. military commanders are increasingly relying on Sunni militias to fight insurgent groups. Our military officers are giving these militias weapons and intelligence and setting them loose.

Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago, the President told us he needed to escalate the commitment of the United States soldiers to Iraq to disarm ethnic militia. Now, we are arming them? Just a few months ago, the President told us that ethnic militias were undermining the security and stability of Iraq. Now, they are the guarantors of the stability and security of Iraq?

When the President's strategy for victory involves arming the people who, just a few months ago, were our sworn enemies, it becomes difficult for any of us to explain to our constituents what our troops are still doing there in Iraq.

The troops have done their job, and in an honorable way, but they will not be successful if the President cannot decide what the mission really is. And I remember him several years ago saying ''mission accomplished.'' I am sure we will hear from a number of people here that we need to give the escalation more time, that we need to wait until September. I'm not willing to do that, Mr. Speaker. I'm not willing to explain to the families of the soldiers who will die between now and September that it took an extra 3 months to figure out the President's plan, and there has been no strategy given to us for success.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, at this point, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from Texas, Judge POE.

Mr. POE. I want to thank the gentlelady for yielding time on this important issue.

Redeployment. Withdrawal. These words mean the same thing, ''we quit.'' ''Quitting'' Iraq is not a plan. It's not even a strategy; it is a total handoff of responsibility to an unstable government with an ill-prepared military.

I don't dispute that we must do more to ready Iraqis to handle their own security. I do insist, however, that we cannot suddenly leave the Iraqis scrambling to defend their new brand of democracy amidst chaos. That is what this ''leave at any cost'' plan would do: leave our enemies and those of the Iraqi people unfettered and free to pursue their diabolical agenda in Iraq and throughout the world.

So I would like to ask those who want to quit exactly what they plan to do to fight the terrorist operatives in Iraq when our troops turn around and leave. What is the plan?

I would also like to know, who, besides the ''New York Times'', is saying that the fight is lost in Iraq? Reports indicate that our troops are making progress. Sectarian murders in Baghdad have declined in the last 6 months. More Iraqis are coming to American troops with information about the terrorists. And Iraqi citizens are organizing against al Qaeda at the local level. Good for them.

Mr. Speaker, General Patton sailed with his soldiers from Algiers to Italy in World War II, and he said to them, ''No man is beaten until he thinks he is.'' This war is not over unless we quit. And when we quit, we are certainly defeated.

Here is what the defeatists say about the battle. They say that our troops were ill-prepared to go into battle, and there weren't enough of them; that they had inferior equipment; that they had improper uniforms for the extreme weather; U.S. intelligence was flawed; that we underestimated the resolve of the enemy; that Americans and our allies were killed by friendly fire. No, Mr. Speaker, this is not the war in Iraq, but this is the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, a battle that my father fought in. Those Americans, led by General Patton and others, did not run or quit because war is hard. You do not win wars by evacuating. And Americans won the Battle of the Bulge and broke the will of the enemy.

I ask this question: How does this plan to force the United States to withdraw from Iraq differ from al Qaeda's plan to force us to withdraw from Iraq? Why wouldn't al Qaeda celebrate if this bill is passed?

Mr. Speaker, General Patton went on to say to his troops, ''The glory of American arms, the honor of our country, the future of the whole world rests in our individual hands. See to it that you are worthy of this great trust.''

I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that the honor of our country is at stake again today, but that's not all. Our security, the security of Iraqis, and the future of democracy and liberty in the Middle East, all of these are in our hands.

Let us be worthy of this trust. And that's the way it is.

□ 1300

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Member from the State of Washington (Mr. SMITH) of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, in listening to this debate, I think the biggest problem is the proponents of the stay-the-course plan in Iraq continually and completely equate the battle in Iraq with the battle against al Qaeda and the terrorists who struck us. The two are not the same. In fact, we heard from Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN that Iraq is but one of the battlefields that we are fighting against al Qaeda. That is absolutely true. Yet we have 80 percent of our assets in Iraq. Meanwhile, report after report come out that al Qaeda is strengthening themselves in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where we don't have enough resources.

Our argument is not for retreat. Our argument is that there is a better way to fight al Qaeda and those who threaten us than to put all of our assets in Iraq while not paying enough attention to where al Qaeda is really strengthening itself. In Iraq, it is primarily a power struggle in which al Qaeda is a player. It is not primarily about al Qaeda's threat against the U.S. In Afghanistan, with the Taliban and al Qaeda, it is a very different story.

Our troops, our assets, the lives and the talents of the people of this country are tied down in Iraq fighting what is primarily a civil war instead of better fighting al Qaeda. In fact, our presence, in many ways, has strengthened al Qaeda. Syria would never be an ally of al Qaeda in any sort of real-world scenario, because al Qaeda wants to topple their regime. Yet to defeat us in Iraq, they have come up with an alliance of convenience.

There is a better way to fight al Qaeda. We are here today to change course in Iraq because it is a better way to protect this country. Timing isn't the issue. Six months ago, these facts were basically the same as they are today. In September, these facts will be basically the same as they are today. We cannot wait if we are going to have the best possible strategy for defeating al Qaeda, the group that threatens us most, instead of getting bogged down in the civil war and in the tribal differences that are present in Iraq. We want to win, not to quit. This is the better way to do it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE), the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman and my good friend from Florida for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we are come to this floor today, it seems to me, in an important moment in the life of two nations. We are come to this floor at a time when our colleagues in the other body are debating a Defense authorization bill and will be considering amendments about a new course in Iraq.

So I do not question the decision of the majority in this chamber to consider these same issues, particularly in light of the release of the initial benchmark assessment report by our military and diplomatic leadership in Iraq. It is a report, I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that is to me frustrating, as it is, I think, to Members on both sides of this aisle. Of 18 benchmarks included in the interim report to Congress, progress on eight of the benchmarks has been characterized as satisfactory, but progress on another eight are unsatisfactory, with it being too early to tell on another two.

Two months from now, the Crocker-Petraeus report that Congress has been promised will provide, we believe, a broader assessment. But, frankly, I am struggling, as a strong supporter of our effort in Iraq, with the failure of this Iraqi Government to step forward with progress toward enacting legislation on de-Ba'athification reform, hydrocarbon resources reform, and the scheduling of and planning of provincial elections.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be transparent about that frustration as much as I was when I met with Iraqi cabinet officials just a short 2 months ago. The Iraqi Government must do more. If there is any unintended benefit of this debate today, my hope is that some of this debate with that message would echo to those people.

But that being said, I will oppose this measure, Mr. Speaker, because I truly believe that defeat and an American failure in Iraq is not an option that we can consider.

With great respect to my colleagues who would endorse this proposal for a precipitous American withdrawal from Iraq by April 1 of next year, I truly believe that, before we make any decision adjusting our strategy on the ground, we ought to wait to hear from those Americans on the ground in Iraq who have been charged with implementing the strategy the President put into effect in January.

I want to reiterate, and I think I speak for many Republicans, Mr. Speaker, as the President said in January, our commitment to this Iraqi Government is not open-ended. But my commitment to an American and Iraqi success is deep and heartfelt. Whether this Iraqi Government can rise to that challenge or not, as the gentleman from Indiana in the other body said, we must find a way to forge agreement to achieve success in Iraq.

The good news of the assessment that has come before the Congress is that we have been achieving some progress as a result of the President's surge strategy on the ground. Between May and June, 26 high-level al Qaeda leaders have been killed or captured.

I know there are some, even the gentleman who just spoke, who questioned whether we are fighting al Qaeda in Iraq. Our soldiers don't question that. Eleven of those al Qaeda leaders killed or captured were emirs, local al Qaeda leaders; seven were facilitators who smuggled foreign weapons; and five were cell leaders who commanded terrorist units.

U.S. operations in the last 2 months, according to the reports released this week, have also uncovered an al Qaeda media network in a nondescript facility outside Samarra. U.S. forces also, I am happy to report, received 23,000 tips during this period of time, which is four to five times the number of tips we were receiving last year.

But, again, that goes against the backdrop of disappointing news. While the American soldier performs with courage and effectiveness, the Iraqi government still fails to demonstrate the urgency.

So as I struggle, I would just ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who share my concerns about the lack of progress in Iraq, as to this solution you bring to the floor, how will your plan for a unilateral withdrawal keep American soldiers safe?

We have 160,000 soldiers there now. The majority of this Congress would call for them to exit Iraq by April 1. Well, in effect it would take 3,000 large convoys, according to some press reports, to evacuate the country down the one road out through Basra and into Kuwait.

Also I would ask, how would this plan for unilateral withdrawal decrease the number of terrorist safe havens in that country? And since al Qaeda is clearly in Iraq, how would the plan for unilateral withdrawal succeed in fighting al Qaeda in Iraq?

Lastly, I say as the ranking member of the Middle East Subcommittee, how will a withdrawal, a precipitous, reckless, irresponsible withdrawal, make the Middle East safer and more stable?

I fear if we lose Iraq, we will lose Israel. We must come together as a Nation to find a way forward to succeed in Iraq.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman, my distinguished friend, the chairman, for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to get our troops out of the middle of an Iraqi civil war. It's time to start bringing our troops home.

My friends on the other side of the aisle are essentially saying ''stay the course.'' At what point, I would ask my friends, do we say that the administration's policies in Iraq have failed and it is time to change course? I think that time is now.

Even the Bush administration's interim assessment of whether the Iraqis are meeting basic benchmarks shows that they have failed to achieve any level of political and economic success. Here we are in the fifth year of the war, longer than World War II, more than half a trillion dollars and 3,600 American lives lost, and Iraqi politicians seem further apart than ever. Indeed, the evidence that our soldiers are involved in an Iraqi civil war is mounting and a solution seems even further from our grasp.

Young American service personnel cannot solve the problem of Iraq, because, ultimately, Iraq is not a military problem anymore; it is a political crisis. And if the Iraqis cannot solve their political problems, we cannot do it for them. Only Iraqi politicians can bring about a solution, and our military personnel should not be dying to hold together the collapsed Iraqi state.

Mr. Speaker, this war has turned into a great strategic fiasco, from the lack of planning to insufficient number of troops, to incompetent management of reconstruction projects, to the use of torture in military prisons. Our blunder in Iraq will affect our ability to succeed in the Middle East and elsewhere for years to come.

Therefore, I strongly support this bill, which requires that we begin redeploying American troops home within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), the distinguished ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of our Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

You know, the things that are being said today, if George Washington had had television and radio and newspapers, would have been said about him. Several of his generals wanted him out because he wasn't winning battles and things were going wrong. Even in the Congress of the United States, Lee of Virginia led the charge to try to get rid of George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

Abraham Lincoln, McClellan, one of his chief generals, who wouldn't fight, ran against him for President, and Lincoln was going to be defeated if Sherman hadn't taken Atlanta.

War is not a popular thing. It's a horrible thing. Chairman LANTOS was a survivor of the camps during the Holocaust during World War II. I would like to ask you a question: What would have happened if we hadn't won that war? How many more Jewish people would have been killed in those camps? Millions more. Six million died, but many millions more probably would have died if Hitler had prevailed. But we had Winston Churchill, who was willing to go to the mat to make sure that they didn't win and that he was going to defeat Hitler.

If we pull out unilaterally like they're talking about right now, we leave those people over there who voted and held their fingers up, we leave those people to their fate with these people who are radicals, who are going to take over.

Iran has camps. Senator LIEBERMAN talked about that. They have training camps right there along the border. They are sending terrorists in to help augment the terrorists in Iraq. And if we unilaterally pull out, just like you're talking about, those people who voted for freedom and democracy, many, many, many of those will die, maybe even more than who have been dying in Darfur, and you have been talking about how important it is that we do something in Darfur.

□ 1315

A vacuum will be created, and Iran will fill it. They will not stop their nuclear development program, and we will be imperiled down the road from their nuclear development program because they'll have a real jumping-off point throughout the Middle East, not just in Iran but in Iraq and possibly Afghanistan, if many of you have your way.

I don't know why we're not waiting on General Petraeus' report. We just gave him authority and gave him the money to pursue this until he reports back in September. I don't understand why we're jumping the gun and trying to force withdrawal right now when General Petraeus, who talked to all of us, has not had a chance to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, 61 million people died in World War II, 6 million Jews; 61 million. In this nuclear age, if we pull in our horns and let Iran run wild over there, which they will, and they develop their nuclear program, how many millions could die in this country as well as around the world? I submit it probably would be more than 61 million.

In the United States, if we pull out like you're talking about, we'll probably have to go back in to stop them from developing that nuclear capability and stop them from training these people to go in and terrorize not only Iran and also Iraq and other places in the Middle East. That is a tinderbox over there and we have to make the right decision.

Every President who has been in a war has been criticized by Congress at one time or another. Every single President, unless it was a very short war where you were in for 5 or 6 days or a couple of months. This is no exception.

Have mistakes been made? You bet. Were mistakes made in World War II? Eight hundred guys drowned in a mock Normandy invasion off the coast of England. If we had television then and the newspapers we have today, we would never have invaded Normandy because they would have stopped it just like that because of criticism of those 800 guys drowning to death. They would have said it wouldn't have worked; it wasn't feasible.

This is a very, very important issue we are talking about. Our brave soldiers are doing their job over there. And they watch on television right now, and what are they hearing? Pull out, pull out, pull out. They are asking, What are we fighting for if the Congress is going to jerk us out right now? We have heard from a lot of them who say, hey, we're doing the job, and we're doing better right now.

I just think we ought to think very long and hard about what we're doing. It could effect a world war. We're in a world war against al Qaeda right now, but it could be a much more devastating war if we don't make the right decisions. I would like to say to my colleagues that I think it's extremely important that you think long and hard about what you're trying to do. Nobody likes war. Nobody likes war.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to our distinguished colleague from Texas, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. GREEN.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing me to speak.

Before I get into my prepared remarks, part of the resolution, if my colleagues would go to page 5 of the resolution, says as part of the justification required, the President shall, at a minimum, address whether it is necessary for the Armed Forces to carry out the following missions: protecting U.S. diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens, including Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions; serving in roles consistent with customary diplomatic positions; but also, engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations in Iraq.

So while I sat here on the floor listened and heard, ''we are bailing out of attacking al Qaeda,'' we are not doing that. This resolution says we will still be there. The President has to certify, though, that is what we are doing. We are not shoring up the Iraqi Government; we are fighting al Qaeda, who brought us September 11. So anybody who says we are leaving is just wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution and this legislation, and thank Chairman SKELTON for his work on the bill. Like Chairman SKELTON, I want to thank our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and their families who are serving our country.

I have stated before, we must let the Iraqi Government know our commitment is not open-ended. I have not supported efforts for immediate withdrawal, but this bill, just like our first supplemental sent to the President, which he vetoed, lets the Iraqi Government know that they need to make some tough choices to stabilize their country within the next several months.

It also gives our administration time to have a comprehensive strategy in Iraq, and allows the troops to remain to protect our diplomatic facilities and fight al Qaeda, and training and equipping the Iraqi security forces.

As this legislation states, we give the President the authority to use the Armed Forces to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by the Iraqi government at that time. But we won that battle. The government was removed. The power and its leader indicted, tried and convicted, and executed by the newly elected, now-democratic government of Iraq.

This bill will bring our troops home by April 1 of next year—that will be more than 5 years since the war began. U.S. taxpayers have spent billions of dollars, and thousands of troops have given their lives to bring security and stability to Iraq.

While the current Iraqi government has been organizing and security forces have been training, our forces have been responsible for every facet of security in Iraq. Our troops defeated Saddam's Army, worked to control the country, policed Iraq's streets, protected the transitional and elected governments, and trained Iraq security forces.

Our military has given the Iraqi government, the Iraqi security forces, and the Iraqi people every opportunity to have a stable, democratic country. It is time to let the Iraqi people know that 5 years is long enough—they must take responsibility for the future of their country.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill to bring our troops home in a safe, responsible timeframe.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, before I yield to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. INGLIS) who has traveled to Iraq several times, I yield myself a minute to answer some questions posed on the other side of the aisle.

What we have here is a nonspecific, nondetailed, nothing planned for victory. The bill on page 3, since the gentleman refers to the bill, let's look at it. It talks about a reduction, a transition, a limited presence, a limited presence, again, with maximum attention paid to the protection of our Armed Forces. What does that mean? So you want our troops to face the terrorists with even less protection?

It shall be further implemented as part of a comprehensive strategy. What do these phrases mean? What would General Petraeus do if this legislation were to become law, which it will not? This is not a plan. It says nothing. It is making a political statement.

I am pleased to yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. INGLIS) who has been to Iraq and understands the situation well.

Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we have a huge challenge in Iraq. It is a challenge for Democrats. It is a challenge for Republicans. It is a challenge for the President and for the Congress. We need an American solution to that challenge. The question before us today is whether this resolution is going to advance that solution or it is actually going to make it more difficult.

I am one of the 17 Republicans that wasn't convinced of the surge; but I am aware now that we are doing it. It is underway, and the plan is clear to have General Petraeus report in September.

I am not certain why it is that we should be debating today a resolution prior to that time because, between now and then, rather than having a succession of political kind of resolutions, we could be working toward an American consensus on this. I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that that consensus is not that far away. I think we can start with two very clear observations. First, our military has done exactly what we have asked them to do. And they have done it very well.

Second, we need to use the American concept of accountability. We need to impose accountability on the Iraqi regime and say to them, we have these benchmarks and here are some rewards for success and some consequences for failure.

And between now and September 30, if we work in a cooperative way, I think we can find a whole series of success check points that we can lay out for the regime in Baghdad. We can say to them, Republicans, Democrats, the President and Congress alike, can say to them, here are the things that we want you to accomplish, and we have the right to insist that you accomplish them because after all, we are spending $2 billion a week. But even more important than that, far more important than that, we have American lives at risk. So we have the right as their protectors. We want you to achieve these things. If you do, you get these rewards. If you fail, these are the consequences. We can lay out a whole series of those if we work together in a cooperative way. The President, the Congress, Republicans and Democrats, we can come up with that American solution and we can find a way forward in Iraq.

The question that I think the proponents of this resolution need to answer is, if you simply set the withdrawal date of April 1, what went with all of that accountability? What went with all of those success check points? The question really for the proponents is: How do you know by April 1, such a date in stone, that you will have succeeded? Why not work cooperatively between now and September, awaiting the report, to prepare a series of very carefully thought out success check points with consequences for failure and rewards for success? And think through the plan. As it is, I think there is not much of a plan; and, therefore, I will vote against the resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my colleague from California (Ms. WOOLSEY).

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman LANTOS for the time and Chairman SKELTON for bringing this important resolution to the House floor.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have called for bold action to bring our troops home, and today we are debating a first step, setting a date certain to bring them home.

Over the next weeks, we will vote to prohibit permanent bases in Iraq. We will continue the drumbeat to fund the safe and complete withdrawal of our troops.

But, Mr. Speaker, despite calls—no, actually pleas—from the American people, some at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue and many right here in the House are just fine with staying the course. In fact, they are once again changing the conversation. They are trying to focus on gut feelings about an upcoming terrorist attack. But the American people will not stand for changing the conversation, and they will not stand for staying the course, nor should we in this Congress.

The costs are just too high: $10 billion a month, and worst of all, the deadliest 3-month period since the escalation; 3,600 troops dead; at least 26,000 wounded; and tens of thousands of Iraqi refugees leaving Iraq every day. This is not only unacceptable; it is immoral.

Today, the Congress must take a bold step to bring our troops home. We must stand up today with the American people. We must say, enough is enough. End the occupation, bring our troops home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL), a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding me this time.

Here we are once again. I feel like we have done this before. Once again, I rise in opposition to the Democratic leadership's latest attempt to politicize the war, and I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote against defeat in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, the debate in this Chamber over the future of Iraq and the best course of action has been passionate and divisive, and each Member of this House has their own opinion. Yet the one thing we should be united on is our end goal and result. That should be the same: a democratic and stable Iraq.

The Democratic majority has chosen to use this month of July, as they have

attempted several times already this year, to hold a series of votes to withdrawal our troops and force a premature end to Iraq's pursuit of freedom and democracy.

We have to ask: What would happen if we withdrawal immediately? When we talk to the experts in the region, the leaders in these governments and key stakeholders in the region, they will tell you it will be a fireball in the Middle East. It will create a vacuum, a safe haven for al Qaeda. Iran will swoop in and take over. They, the key nations in the region, are quite frankly terrified of this action, and they tell us that privately.

I believe that we can cannot afford that course of action. The Democrats have chosen this course not because it is in the national interest of this country but rather because they believe it provides them with good talking points to use back home. I submit they are mistaken.

In my view, Americans are tired and frustrated with the partisan squabbling over the war which has done nothing to improve the situation in Iraq. Putting politics above our national interest while the men and women of our military are fighting overseas is simply unacceptable.

□ 1330

In a time of war, politics should end at the water's edge.

There is another way forward. I and others have introduced the Iraq Study Group recommendations Implementation Act of 2007. This legislation is bipartisan. It is a comprehensive set of recommendations, a plan of action to succeed in Iraq, a plan which matches our military might with political solutions, with economic solutions and with a diplomatic surge which can bring peace and stability to the troubled nation. This bill has gained strength by those who recognize that moving forward in a unified way still exists in the Congress.

The Iraq Study Group report offers a consensus policy that the vast majority of Americans support. The sponsors of the Democrat withdrawal bill that we are debating here today, however, have decided that even though the surge only came into effect 3 weeks ago, that it's already failed and we need to question it and throw it out.

They further decided that we should declare defeat immediately and not wait for General Petraeus to come to Congress and give us his firsthand report. This rush to judgment, this rush to action on their part makes it clear that they have not reached an informed decision but, rather, a political one.

Throughout the course of our American history, we've answered the call for freedom, and we, Mr. Speaker, I submit are at our greatest when we are united as a Nation; at our worst when we are divided.

We should unite behind the ideals which helped achieve victory against the threats to our very way of life, such as the victories against the Third Reich, such as the threats by the Soviet empire and the victory against the Soviet Union.

Today, the greatest threat is the threat of terrorism, and the conflict in Iraq poses one of the greatest challenges to the American experience. We must unite, or we will surely fail.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2½ minutes to a distinguished colleague from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee for allowing members of that committee to show their commitment through their legislative work in a hearing at the early stages of his leadership when we were allowed to present solutions. They were not Republican solutions or Democratic solutions. They were solutions for those of us who love America, and I just want to simply reinforce that. I thank Mr. SKELTON for his leadership.

I have legislation that declares a military success, and I rise today to make it clear that I believe that the fallen in battle are heroes, and those who still fight carry their banner, for 3,611 have died, and I don't know why we're not on this floor declaring a military victory, thanking our soldiers.

And my good friend from Texas says that he supports the Iraq Study Group. So do I and I have legislation. We all have legislation that responds to the Iraq Study Group. I might remind him that that report, bipartisan report, speaks articulately to redeployment, and so when we look at the costs of the war, $120 billion, Americans are asking, should one more drop of blood be shed? And my answer to that is, no. Should we engage? Yes. Should we involve in the surge of diplomacy? Absolutely.

We want to make sure that all of those nation states can work to help solve the divide, the civil war. But we must face the facts that this process that the President is continuing to repeat does not work. It is wracked with corruption and misdirection. There were no weapons of mass destruction.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I have been disturbed this whole week as I listened to the Secretary of Homeland Security speak about his gut feeling of the possibility of a terrorist attack. I'm a member of that committee. I live every day with the idea that the question will be asked by Americans to the Homeland Security Committee and the Homeland Security Department, does the Secretary realize that we have fueled the fires of terrorism by training terrorists in this war.

And so when I speak of why we must end, it is to save lives. It is to reconcile Iraq, and it is to make America safer. I ask for support of the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act. I rise in strong support of this legislation because I am listening, and responding to the will of the American people. Last November 2006, Americans went to polls by the millions united in their resolve to vote for change. They voted for a new direction and a change in the Bush administration's disastrous policy in Iraq. The new Democratic majority heard them and responded by passing H.R. 1591, the Iraq Accountability Act. The President vetoed the bill, demanding instead a continuation of the ancien régime under which the Republican-led Congress gave him a blank check to mismanage the occupation and reconstruction of Iraq.

Those days are over. No matter how many veto threats the President issues, this Congress is not going to give him a blank check to escalate and continue the war ad infinitum. It is long past time for change in Iraq. It is time for the people and Government of Iraq to take primary responsibility for their own country. It is time for the President to recognize the reality on the ground in Iraq. The time when a surge in troops is useful and necessary is past. It is now time to redeploy our troops and launch a diplomatic surge for national and political reconciliation in Iraq. H.R. 2956 will help achieve this goal and that is why I support the measure.

Mr. Speaker, there is no more important issue facing the Congress, the President, and the American people than the war in Iraq. It is a subject which agitates the passions of all Americans, including Members of Congress. The Framers understood that while the military does the fighting, a nation goes to war. That is why the Framers lodged the power to declare war in the Congress, the branch of Government closest to the people. They knew that the decision to go to war was too important to be left to the whim of a single person, no matter how wise or well-informed he or she might be.

Four years ago, President Bush stood under a banner that proclaimed "Mission Accomplished." If the mission was to further place our troops in harm's way at the hands of insurgents and sectarian violence, then it is mission accomplished. After spending more than $450 billion sacrificing the lives of 3,611 of America's finest citizen-soldiers, what have we accomplished and where are we headed?

I cannot support the President's waging of a war that has no clear direction, does not meet the benchmarks that the President set, and has no visible target.

Four years after launching the invasion, conquest, and occupation of Iraq, the evidence is clear and irrefutable: The preemptive invasion of Iraq, while a spectacularly executed military operation, was a strategic blunder without parallel in the history of American foreign policy. This is what can happen when the Congress allows itself to be stampeded into authorizing a president to launch a preemptive war of choice.

It is time to change our strategy in Iraq. It is time to engage the key stakeholders in the Middle East and make real strides towards securing a just and lasting peace in Iraq and for the Iraqi people. And most important, bring our troops home so they can be reunited with their families, friends, and neighbors.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I support H.R. 2956. The Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act requires a responsible redeployment of U.S. troops beginning within 120 days of enactment and ending by April 1, 2008. The legislation requires the President to publicly justify the post-redeployment missions for the U.S. military in Iraq and the minimum number of troops necessary to carry out those missions.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is consistent with the advice of military and foreign policy experts, ensures the safety of our men and women in uniform, addresses our commitment to fighting terrorism, and reflects the will of the American people.

Mr. Speaker, the need for a new direction in Iraq could not be clearer. In the face of mounting evidence that progress is not being made in Iraq, military leaders, defense experts, Republican and Democratic Members of Congress, and the American people are demanding change. Yet the President continues to urge continued support for a failed policy that is not making America safer or supporting our troops.

In a report released today by the White House, the administration concedes that violence continues in Iraq and that the Iraqi Government has failed to meet key benchmarks endorsed by the President in January and political reconciliation is nonexistent. By the Bush administration's own admission, there is unsatisfactory progress on all of the political reconciliation benchmarks announced by the President on January 10, 2007.

In fact, just this week, the National Security Network reported that since the President announced his ''surge'' policy 6 months ago, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, approximately 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush and Vice President CHENEY have been given numerous chances and ample time by the American people and the Congress to straighten out the mess in Iraq. They have failed. It is little wonder that the criticism of the administration's failed policy in Iraq is mounting by the day. Respected military leaders, like LTG William Odom, have spoken forcefully. According to Lieutenant General Odom, ''No effective new strategy can be devised for the United States until it begins withdrawing its forces from Iraq. Only that step will break the paralysis that now confronts us.''

Key Republican Senators are joining the chorus of critics. In addition to Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Senator RICHARD LUGAR, some of the President's allies in Congress have spoken out. Senator PETE DOMENICI says, ''There's no reason to wait . . . [I am] trying to tell [Bush] that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.'' Senator ELIZABETH DOLE says, ''It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008.'' Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER says, ''The President needs a new strategy.''

And just this week, in a USA Today/Gallup Poll, more than 70 percent of Americans favor removal of almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 2008, leaving a limited number for counterterrorism efforts.

MILITARY SUCCESS IN IRAQ ACT

Finally Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation because it is grounded in the fundamental principles I first announced in February of this year when I introduced H.R. 930, the Military Success in Iraq and Diplomatic Surge for National and Political Reconciliation in Iraq Act of 2007. I introduced this legislation, the Military Success in Iraq Act of 2007, MSIA or ''Messiah,'' to offer an honorable deliverance from Iraq. Let me explain.

In October 2002, the Congress authorized the President to use military force against Iraq to achieve the following objectives:

(1) To disarm Iraq of any weapons of mass destruction that could threaten the security of the United States and international peace in the Persian Gulf region;

(2) To change the Iraqi regime so that Saddam Hussein and his Baathist party no longer posed a threat to the people of Iraq or its neighbors;

(3) To bring to justice any members of al Qaeda known or found to be in Iraq bearing responsibility for the attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11,2001;

(4) To ensure that the regime of Saddam Hussein would not provide weapons of mass destruction to international terrorists, including al Qaeda; and

(5) To enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

Every one of these objectives has long been accomplished. Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein has been deposed, captured, and dealt with by the Iraqi people. The American military has caught or killed virtually every member of al Qaeda in Iraq that was even remotely responsible for the 9–11 attack on our country. Last, all relevant U.N. resolutions relating to Iraq have been enforced. In other words, every objective for which the use of force in Iraq was authorized by the 2002 resolution has been achieved.

Mr. Speaker, since the objectives which led Congress to pass the 2002 Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) have been achieved, I believe the authorization to use that military force expires automatically. My legislation affirms this proposition. Additionally, I believe, and my legislation provides, that it is the Congress that is the ultimate arbiter as to whether the objectives set forth in a congressional AUMF have been achieved.

Mr. Speaker, where a Congressional authorization to use military force has expired, the President must obtain a new authorization to continue the use force. My legislation requires the President to do that as well. Finally, my bill requires that if the Congress does not vote to reauthorize the use of force in Iraq within 90 days after determining that the objectives set forth in the 2002 AUMF have been achieved, all American armed forces in Iraq must be redeployed out of Iraq. Thus, under my legislation, an up-or-down vote must be held by the House and Senate to continue waging war in Iraq.

I am not talking about ''cutting and running,'' or surrendering to terrorists. And I certainly am not talking about staying in Iraq forever or the foreseeable future. The Armed Forces won the war they were sent to fight. Their civilian leadership has not succeeded in winning the peace. That is why the United States should surge diplomatically and politically.

Title II of my legislation, the ''Diplomatic Surge for Political and National Reconciliation in Iraq Act,'' implements twelve of the most important recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. This approach is now gaining widespread support among many who had previously disparaged diplomacy in favor of military force.

All six of Iraq's neighbors—Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait—have an interest in a stabilized Iraq because as the Iraq Study Group report makes clear, none of these countries wants to live with an Iraq that, after our redeployment, becomes a failed state or a humanitarian catastrophe that could become a haven for terrorists or hemorrhages millions more refugees who will stream into neighboring countries.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the enormous financial cost, the human cost to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces has also been high but they have willingly paid it. Operation Iraqi Freedom has exacerbated the Veterans Administration health care facility maintenance backlog; placed an undue strain on the delivery of medical treatment and rehabilitative services for current and new veterans; and exacted a heavy toll on the equipment, training and readiness requirements, and the families of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, everyday when I walk into my office I am reminded of the courageous young men and women who have given their lives in service to our nation. Outside my office I have displayed a poster-board that displays the names and faces of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. The poster-board is nearly full. I do not want to start another board. Let me call the roll of honor of the remarkable sons and daughters of Houston, Texas who have made the ultimate sacrifice and gave the last full measure of devotion: Capt. Eric L. Allton, Petty Officer 1st Class Howard E. Babcock IV, Spec. Adolfo C. Carballo, Staff Sgt. Brian T. Craig, Staff Sgt. Terrence D. Dunn, Pfc. Analaura Esparza Gutierrez, 1st Lt. David M. Fraser, Lance Cpl. Phillip C. George, Spec. Clinton R. Gertson, Capt. Andrew R. Houghton, Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak, Spec. John P. Johnson, Pfc. Roy L. Jones III, Cpl. Brian M. Kennedy, Staff Sgt. Dexter S. Kimble,

Spec. Scott Q. Larson Jr., Staff Sgt. Hector Leija, Pfc. Jesus A. Leon-Perez, Sgt. Keelan L. Moss, Tech. Sgt. Walter M. Moss Jr., Staff Sgt. Kenneth I. Pugh, Staff Sgt. William D. Richardson, Staff Sgt. Timothy J. Roark, Sgt. Michael T. Robertson, Cpl. Benjamin S. Rosales, Staff Sgt. Alberto V. Sanchez, Pfc. Leroy Sandoval Jr., Pfc. Armando Soriano, Cpl. Tomas Sotelo Jr., Sgt. Danny R. Soto, Spec. Juan M. Torres, Lance Cpl. Thomas J. Zapp.

Mr. Speaker, the misguided, mismanaged, and costly debacle that is the Iraq War which was preemptively launched by President Bush in March 2003 despite the opposition of me and 125 of my colleagues in the House of Representatives has lasted longer than America's involvement in World War II, the greatest conflict in all of human history.

But there is a difference. The Second World War ended in complete and total victory for the United States and its allies. But then again, in that conflict America was led by FDR, a great Commander-in-Chief, who had a plan to win the war and secure the peace, listened to his generals, and sent troops in sufficient numbers and sufficiently trained and equipped to do the job.

My friends, I say with sadness that we have not enjoyed that same quality of leadership

throughout the conduct of the Iraq War. The results, not surprisingly, have been disastrous. To date, the war in Iraq has claimed the lives of 3,611 brave servicemen and women. The last three months of the war have been among the deadliest (104 in April, 123 in May, 101 in June, and 32 in the first week of July). More than 26,690 Americans have been wounded, many suffering the most horrific injuries. American taxpayers have paid nearly $450 billion to sustain this misadventure. To grasp the magnitude of this number, consider that American taxpayers are spending: $120,000,000,000 per year; $10,000,000,000 per month; $2,307,692,380 per week; $329,670,330 per day; $13,736,264 per hour; $228,938 per minute; $3,816 per second.

Mr. Speaker, last November the American people signaled clearly their loss of confidence in the President's leadership and their desire for a new direction in Iraq. The new Democratic majority has begun to deliver. And we will not rest, Mr. Speaker, until we are clearly on a glide path to the day when our troops come home.

And even then our work will not be done. We must still be about the business of repairing the damage to America's international reputation and prestige. But this Democratic majority, led by the Progressive Caucus and the Out of Iraq Caucus, has ushered in a new era of oversight, accountability, and transparency to defense and reconstruction contracting and procurement.

I urge all members to join me in supporting H.R. 2956. This is the best way to ensure accountability to our soldiers who have been sent into battle without proper training or equipment or a clear mission. It is the best way to keep faith with our veterans who are not getting the best medical care when they come home. Passing this legislation is essential to restoring our military that is being stretched to the limits by the Bush policy. Last, it is absolutely necessary to regain the confidence of the American people who demand a new direction in Iraq.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume because I'd like to comment on a point that was raised by my good friend from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) regarding the intentions of Iran.

The deputy interior minister for security affairs and the former deputy head of the Revolutionary Guards in Iran said on April 26 of this year, ''Iran has long-range missiles that can make nowhere safe for America.''

He also said, ''Iran is able to fire tens of thousands of missiles per day at American targets on a daily basis and, with its long-range missiles, can threaten Israel which is acting as America's'' proxy.

So it is clear to us, Mr. Speaker, that Iran seeks not just to wipe Israel off the map, as Ahmadinejad has said time and again, but to destroy the United States. So is the plan to immediately leave Iraq so that Iran can begin its takeover of the region? Is this in the national security interests of the United States? Is that going to make us safer?

I think that we should carefully consider what will happen were we to withdraw immediately as, it has been called for.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, H.R. 2956, and for the safe redeployment of our combat troops out of Iraq.

I thank our Chairman LANTOS of the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding time to me and want to reiterate that for 4 years now our administration has sacrificed its many soldiers for an Iraqi Government that has failed to take responsibility for its own security. While many of these soldiers have made great sacrifices on our Nation's behalf, the President has failed to support them with a viable strategy to succeed in Iraq and then to end combat operations.

This bill would force the President to be accountable to this Congress and to the American people. Yes, the American people deserve to know how this war is conducted and how it will end.

This bill would force the Iraqi Government to realize that America's commitment to their nation is not open-ended and that they must be accountable to their people for security and stability.

This bill would allow our military to safely redeploy from combat in Iraq to better confront emerging security threats around the world.

This bill would end the drain upon our Nation's resources that could better be used on our priorities at home such as improving our homeland security, strengthening our economy, and for providing for our citizens.

I strongly support this important legislation and request the President heed the call of this Congress to support our troops by redeploying them out of Iraq.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE).

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her yielding and for her work on the issue and thank the majority party for their work. We're involved in a very serious discussion here.

I was in the Air Force in 1970, in Reese Air Force Base in Texas in pilot training, and the Shah of Iran's son was in the class right behind me. I didn't know much about the Shah of Iran, coming from Hobbs, New Mexico, but we began to watch and began to visualize as he left training, and those Iranians who were in the training class with me left and went back home to Iran, what their life was like flying jets in the Middle East. And then in 1979, the Shah was suddenly out of power, just like that. The ayatollah came to power and instituted a tremendous repressive regime that continues to this day.

Now, the question that our friends on the other side of the aisle fail to ask is what is their plan to see that our friends in the Middle East have stability because, in fact, they're balancing the terrorists in their own countries every day. They're balancing them using our force and our will and our promise to help.

So what do our friends in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, what do they do? When I went to Israel earlier this year, Israel simply said they fall. If you leave Iraq, those nations fall.

Now, it's an uncomfortable truth, but somehow we're not going to talk about some uncomfortable truth these days. It's an uncomfortable truth that the entire Middle East is facing a problem of stability. If the entire Middle East faces a problem with stability, the entire world has a problem of stability because, if the Middle East exports about 25 to 30 percent of the world's oil, which it does, then the world oil market becomes destabilized, the world economy becomes destabilized, and in the end, the terrorists win because they have destabilized the world rather than defeat any of the forces in the world. That's been their long-term plan, to export instability, and they have been doing a very good job of it.

Now, the President after 9/11 said we're going to fight a war on terror that simply does three things: we're going to take away the training camps, we're going to choke off their funding, and we're going to take the fight to them. Now, you can agree or disagree that Iraq is a place of combat with the terrorists, but it looks like to me that the terrorists from all over the world are coming in there. Iran is providing terrorists and weapons, Syria, other nations; and so whether or not it appears that the war is there, our soldiers believe that they're actually fighting al Qaeda.

So the President's plan has definitely uprooted the training camps. We've begun to squeeze off the funding to the al Qaeda troops, to the terrorists worldwide, and we have taken the fight to them. But now then, when we retreat, when we come home, the question that has failed to be asked by our friends who have this resolution calling our troops home, it fails to ask what do we do for world stability at that point. It is a serious omission. It's not accidental.

I appreciate the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee who serves with great distinction as vice chair of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-Proliferation and Trade, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I stand 100 percent behind this bill for a responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq. Much has been said. There are several points I would like to make going forward.

First of all, this is responsible. This is not something that was just put together. This was put together with military advisers of the first order, generals on the ground who were consulted, and by two of the most distinguished individuals in this Chamber, our distinguished chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. TOM LANTOS, and our distinguished chairman of our Armed Services Committee, Mr. IKE SKELTON. Nobody can argue their credentials. Nobody can argue the credentials of the military advisers that put this together.

But most importantly, the people that no one has mentioned, the entity that no one has mentioned, the most important entity of all is the American people. This bill represents the will of the American people. Seventy percent of the American people support this action today.

Now, let me remind you of the words of Robert Jackson, one of our distinguished Supreme Court Justices in the steel seizure case of 1952, when a similar situation was in place, where we were at loggerheads then with the executive branch and the legislative branch, but at that point, the Supreme Court decided that Congress has the authority. And Jackson went on to say that when the executive branch denies, disrespects and disavows the authority of Congress, we enter into what is referred to as a zone of twilight, or a twilight zone.

□ 1345

That's where we are now, to get out of this twilight zone of destruction and mayhem, of instability in the Middle East. You talk about stability in the Middle East. We are more unstable in the Middle East now as a result of what we have done.

Get us out of this twilight zone. This bill is the way to do it, and I commend it and hope we pass it overwhelmingly.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Generals on the ground were consulted on this bill? Seventy percent of Americans support this bill, support immediate withdrawal of our troops?

This bill before us is nothing more than political hyperbole, partisan politics using our troops as cover, because the American people don't have this bill in front of them. We didn't have this bill before us until just a few hours ago.

Let me show you exactly what the Democratic leadership has scheduled for us to debate, and I use the term lightly. For an entire day, rather than do the hard work of our Congress that we need to do to have more serious discussions on Iraq, on this bill, on appropriations, it's six pages long, six pages long.

It was introduced yesterday, so I don't know what commanders on the field we consulted with. I would be interested in doing that, in finding that out. The first page is the title. The second page, it's a ''sense of Congress,'' language, nonbinding. The third page says ''reduce forces to limited presence.'' Who understands what that is? Certainly not the drafters of this bill. The fourth and the fifth page calls for a strategy.

Yet this Congress already has demanded a strategy from the President, and it is due in September, a report. That's what the Democrats say they have asked for. But yet they are not willing to wait for that report.

The last page is definitions. This is what we are debating today, Democratic politics using our troops as pawns. Commanders on the field who were consulted? Give me a break.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to a valued member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, my friend and colleague from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Now, certainly this measure is part of an ongoing effort to try to bring comprehensive change. We do have a vested interest in the Middle East as we are engaged in this war on terror throughout the world.

Notwithstanding that fact, though, for 6 years, our administration has had a blank check in Iraq, and that war on terror, and unfortunately, I think, by any critical evaluation, at best it has been bungled. At worst, we have made a mess of things. The previous Congresses have left little to be desired in terms of real oversight.

With unlimited resources, we have complicated our relations with the Middle East, and it's unfortunate for our country. It seems for every step forward, we take a step back. This legislation, then again, is another effort to begin a new direction, which will protect our interests in the Middle East and begin to develop a plan to bring our troops home.

What is lacking in this legislation though is a requirement for the President to tell us how we are going to, in fact, stabilize the areas with all the diplomatic resources available to us and our allies throughout the world in this region. Nonetheless, under the current circumstances, this legislation, I believe, is the next logical step. Clearly, doing more of the same continues to risk precious lives of American men and women in uniform, not to mention our Treasury, with little responsiveness, unfortunately and cooperation from the Iraqi Government.

Hopefully, this legislation will allow the administration to engage and work with us for constructive change that the American people demands.

I ask for an ''aye'' vote.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank you for keeping such careful order on the floor on such a controversial topic.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair thanks the gentlewoman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I have the pleasure of yielding 3 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) who has been to Iraq several times, has wrestled with his conscience and understands the situation of jihadist terrorism worldwide.

Mr. SHAYS. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

I deeply admire TOM LANTOS, my friend, whom I have known for so many years, and IKE SKELTON, the authors of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this is a debate about an issue we all have strong feelings about. I regret to say it's a debate that's under a closed rule that doesn't allow all aspects of this issue to come to the forefront, and I deeply regret that.

We asked for a new Secretary of Defense. We wanted Rumsfeld replaced, and he was replaced by Secretary Gates. We asked for a new general on the ground and a new strategy, and General Petraeus was chosen.

After all that he had already done, he was willing to step in. He received unanimous support in the Senate, unanimous support. He has asked one thing from us with this new strategy. He said, give me until September 15 to show what we can do with this surge.

What this resolution does is it bypasses that. It basically, in my judgment, pulls the rug out from under General Petraeus. I think we owe it to him, unless he were to come back and say, we need to change our strategy right now, but he hasn't done that.

In my 17 visits to Iraq, I have seen good months and bad months. Since December, I think it's pretty extraordinary that we have won back Anbar province, an all-Sunni province. The irony is, we had given it up, and it had become a mini Afghanistan with al Qaeda acting like the Taliban. The tribal leaders came to us and said, help us get rid of them.

If we were not there to do that, they would be stuck with an Afghanistan with a Taliban type leadership in all of the Sunni area in Anbar province. But, fortunately, we didn't pull the rug out from under them. We are there to help them.

I think there are at least two inconvenient truths that we are dealing with. One inconvenient truth is the one that Al Gore talks about, which I wish more of us paid attention to, and that's global warming. The other inconvenient truth is what the 9/11 Commission report says, we are confronting Islamist terrorists.

Islamist terrorists have made it very clear that this is ground zero. If we were to leave Iraq, Iraq, in my judgment, would be like Afghanistan, with no troops to prevent the insurgents to do just what the Taliban did. I just hope and pray that we find a way to work together, that we look at bringing the Iraq Study Group presentation before us, because we all say we can support it. Let's build on what we can agree.

I conclude by making this point. We ask the Shia, Sunnis and Kurds to work together and reach out to each other, but Democrats and Republicans are having a hard time reaching out and working together. Bring forward a bipartisan proposal and see how well it could do on the House floor.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to my good friend and distinguished colleague from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this bill to finally end this disastrous war. President Bush's war in Iraq has been the biggest foreign policy catastrophe in our Nation's history. We have been distracted from doing the job in Afghanistan, the Nation that harbored al Qaeda. Hundreds of billions of dollars have evaporated into the sands of Iraq while vital needs have gone unmet at home. Our international reputation has been battered and bruised. Our Army has been hollowed out.

The war has cut short the lives of more than 3,600 of our bravest citizens, injured tens of thousands more. Yet this President continues to insist that we remain in Iraq.

Today we must tell this President he is wrong. We must take a stand against this tragic war, begin the hard work of repairing our foreign policy. We must listen to the American people and vote to end this war.

Let us truly support our troops and vote to bring them home.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to Mr. PRICE of Georgia.

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad and disappointing day for this House and for America. Once again, the majority is placing politics over national security, politics over reasoned policy, politics and partisanship over citizens and sanity.

Clearly this bill was not written in response to what our generals think, whose interim report was released just hours ago. Instead, it was written in reaction to polls and to political pressure from MoveOn.org and others. This isn't a thoughtful piece of legislation to achieve success in Iraq or success for America.

The lack of definition for a limited presence included in the bill reveals that this is just another cynical attempt by the majority to politically pander. How terribly disappointing.

In effect, this legislation is a vote of no confidence in our military commanders, and it's a shot of encouragement to al Qaeda. It's pure political opportunism, and it's devoid of military strategy.

As Members of Congress, we have a greater responsibility than just to politics. We have a responsibility to do what is in the best interest of long-term American security. We must be thoughtful. We must be deliberate in our actions.

We have a capable leader, General David Petraeus, unanimously approved by the Senate, the expert in counterinsurgency strategy. He was given by this Congress, just a few weeks ago, until September, to make positive progress in Iraq and report.

But this majority isn't interested in what our military commanders are capable of, or the situation on the ground. Their only interest is politics, in raising the white flag and in coming home without any thought or definition as to when or where they are willing to defend our security.

But because the political climate is ripe, the majority wants to undercut our troops. It's upsetting, it's sad, and it's very disconcerting that politics would trump national security.

This bill signals to our enemies that it doesn't matter what the commanders say. It says that thoughtful military strategy takes a back seat to good politics.

This isn't an exit strategy, it's a political strategy. How terribly disappointing.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this bill and to commit to positively working together on behalf of the American people and American security.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, before yielding to our last speaker, I want to express my disgust and outrage at this arrogance which we have just heard.

The previous speaker assumes that there is a monopoly of virtue and wisdom on one side. That is not the case.

We have listened to our colleagues on the other side with respect and attention, and that is exactly what we demand of every single Member on the Republican side. This was an appalling spectacle debasing what has thus far been a fine and noble debate.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the conscience of this House, my good friend from Georgia, Congressman JOHN LEWIS.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. I am going to thank my friend, my colleague, Chairman LANTOS, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. This resolution is not a panacea. It will not get us out of Iraq tomorrow, next week or next month, but it is a step that will bring an end to this madness.

Our President, the commander in chief, told us a few days ago, that the surge is just beginning when he deployed more troops 6 months ago. He asked Members of Congress to wait. He is telling the American people to be patient.

We cannot wait. We cannot be patient. The American people want an end to this war and end it now.

How many more of our young people must die before we realize enough is enough? One more day of involvement is too many. One more death is one too many. This war is not worthy of another drop of human blood.

It is leaving a stain on the moral fabric of this Nation and destroying our credibility in the community of nations. We will never find the answer to Iraq down the barrel of a gun or in the warhead of a missile.

Vote for this resolution and bring this war to an end and bring it to an end now.

□ 1400

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield the balance of our time to the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. SKELTON.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on the bill, H.R. 2956.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from New Hampshire (Ms. SHEA-PORTER), a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, the National Counterterrorism Center recently issued a report entitled, ''Al Qaeda Better Positioned to Strike the West.'' This report concludes that al Qaeda has reorganized, regrouped, and is stronger now than it has been in years.

Yesterday, in the Armed Services Committee, we heard testimony that al Qaeda has established itself in the mountains along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and is operating with relative impunity. On Tuesday, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff says he has a gut feeling we will be attacked this summer.

For years, Democrats have been saying we need to focus our efforts on combating al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but the President took our brave soldiers and our resources to Iraq. Now it appears that the President's disastrous policy of ignoring the real threats and bogging our military down in Iraq has borne fruit. The area and the country is destabilized and more dangerous to their neighbors and to us. Thanks to the President's policy, our military is now overextended, our Nation is deep in debt, and our international reputation is stained.

This cannot be allowed to continue. We are America the beautiful. We are the greatest country on Earth. We are the beacon of light and hope. We need to withdraw from Iraq, place our soldiers in a place where they can respond to any terrorist threats, and protect our borders as we once again reclaim our moral reputation.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I claim the time that has been yielded to me, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have the greatest respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON). I honor him and respect him deeply. But this legislation is deeply and fatally flawed. It will damage America and American interests for two reasons:

First, it is a purely political document, hopelessly vague and meaningless. Let me explain why. The bill turns on two key terms. One, that the United States transition to a ''limited presence'' in Iraq within the next 120 days; and, two, that the President provide a justification of ''the minimum force levels required to protect the United States' national security interests in Iraq.''

While I am pleased that the authors recognize that we are in Iraq to protect our national security interests, again, the legislation is hopelessly vague and therefore meaningless. Neither of these two key terms, ''limited presence'' and ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national security interests'' is defined. Oh, the bill has a definition section and other terms are defined, but ''limited presence'' and ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national security interests'' aren't defined.

You might ask yourself, why would the authors of the measure leave two such critically important terms undefined? Well, the answer is easy: Because this bill is not about policy; this bill is about politics.

The chairman of the Armed Services Committee knows exactly why these terms are not defined, and indeed the Democratic leadership knows why these terms are not defined. They are not defined because they need ambiguity. Indeed, ambiguity in this legislation is essential to its passage. They know that they can't agree on what the meanings of these terms are. You see, if they defined ''limited presence'' as too many troops, then their most liberal, most antiwar Members would not vote for the legislation. They couldn't. And, if they defined limited presence too low, then their Blue Dog Members would not support the bill. Again, this bill is about beating up on the President and about scaring nervous Members of Congress.

Again, let's look at the other term, ''minimum force levels required to protect U.S. national security interests.'' Why not define what that minimum is? Answer, again, if they define it too high, those who want out tonight and want our force levels at the lowest conceivable level couldn't vote for the bill. And if they define it too low, then those who recognize we face a threat from Iran and other regions' interests wouldn't vote for the bill. It is deeply flawed for those reasons.

And I would ask proponents of the bill what they would say if the President, as he could under the language of the bill, were to decide that ''limited presence'' means 154,000 troops, just 1,000 fewer than we have now? That would comply with the letter of the bill, but it wouldn't satisfy proponents of the bill.

And what if the President, as he can under the language of the bill, were to define the term ''minimum force level required to protect U.S. national interests'' not as 155,000 troops as we have today, but rather at 500,000 troops?

You see, they can't agree on those terms. I wonder how many of the Members realize that the critical terms in this bill aren't defined.

The bill is also flawed for a second reason, and that is that it reneges on the essential agreement Congress struck just 2 weeks ago. It is a little bit like Lucy pulling the football out from under Linus just before he kicks it. Here, don't rely on my opinion; rely instead on today's Washington Post. You see, today's Washington Post editorial makes the case for me. The Washington Post, not exactly a conservative journal, says, ''It seems like just weeks ago, because it was, that Congress approved funding for the war in Iraq and instructed General David H. Petraeus to report back on the war's progress in September.'' Ladies and gentlemen, this isn't September.

The Post goes on to write, ''Before Congress begins ordering withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they asked for to see whether their strategy can offer some hope.'' We owe it to those generals to give them, as The Washington Post says, the months they asked for, but, instead, we have given them 27 days.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BOSWELL).

Mr. BOSWELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for this opportunity to speak. I rise in support of this legislation.

Much has been said these past years about the extent of the U.S. engagement in Iraq. The Iraqi people have made progress. Saddam is gone. They have had elections. We are told they have got over 300,000 Iraqi police and soldiers trained, equipped, and in the field. They are engaged in a civil war, and we cannot be involved in trying to referee that. As well as others in this body, I have been given assurances that they have that many troops.

I believe the war in Iraq has had a serious negative effect on the readiness of our brave men and women in uniform who are serving with honor and distinction. Their deployments and, oftentimes, redeployments without adequate time at home to rest and train is affecting our Nation's ability to meet future contingencies. As it stands today, listen up, as it stands today, we do not have, repeat, do not have a single combat-ready brigade ready to be deployed.

The United States cannot chart the destiny of the people of Iraq. The Iraqi Government must take responsibility for its own nation, and this legislation puts us on the path to see to that worthy and noble cause.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS).

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

The interim report released by the President today details exactly what I anticipated, a lack-of-progress report which demonstrates that the Iraqi Government has made the least progress on those key benchmarks that are vital to achieving stabilization.

The President at a press conference earlier today stressed the usual line of excuses that he has far too often utilized in the past, stating that we need to give General Petraeus time to show that the plus-up is effective and stress the importance of waiting until the September 15 progress report is released before drawing conclusions on the policy in Iraq. However, the President forgot to mention that General Petraeus said in an interview just last month that the chances of having a stable Iraqi Government in place by September are slim to none. Those are his words.

Frankly, our troops need our support, and that support must be their redeployment, which will end the continued bloodshed.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee, my friend, my colleague, the gentlelady from California (Mrs. TAUSCHER).

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to voice my very strong support for Chairman SKELTON's legislation. It represents an unequivocal belief that the United States cannot and should not be in the business of fighting Iraq's civil war.

For over 4 years, it has been clear to me that our troops successfully and bravely accomplished the mission authorized by the President in the fall of 2002.

Today's report that our troops have done their job but the Iraqi Government has not underscores the deep problems with the Bush administration's approach. We are no longer at war with Iraq's Government; instead, our forces are caught in the middle of an escalating sectarian conflict in Iraq, with no end in sight. Yet, the President continues to blindly stay the course, with disastrous and deadly consequences.

Chairman SKELTON's bill would make significant reductions in our troop presence by April of 2008. Democrats, along with our Republican colleagues who no longer trust the President's leadership, are doing all we can to change the President's full speed ahead mismanagement of the war in Iraq and divert the policy toward returning our troops home sooner and safer.

This more responsible presence, which limits U.S. presence to fighting

terrorism and training Iraq forces, will be a first step in restoring stability in Iraq and the readiness of our military which has been badly damaged over the last 4 years.

I appreciate Chairman SKELTON's leadership on this matter, and I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense approach.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona.

And while I have the utmost respect for the chairman, I disagree with him on this resolution and I do rise to oppose the resolution today.

I guess I don't like the rhetoric of defeat. And I think that if we look at the situation in Iraq and if we look at the global war on terror, we have to ask ourselves: If we accept defeat at the hands of the terrorists, then what type message are we going to send? And I don't think that we would like that. Because if we pull out now, it is going to say that the U.S. is weak in the war on terror. It is going to say that we accept roving death squads in the streets of Baghdad, that we accept ethnic cleansing and a region engulfed in all-out chaos. That is the message we send. Just as when we were children, our actions carry a message with them.

Our soldiers deserve the confidence of their leaders, and not second-guessing by politicians that are a half world away. I think that they need to know that we are with them.

I had a message from a Marine parent. And they said, You know, we have our men out there fighting every day. They are using all the tools available to them. They are in combat. They are in patrols. They are using technology to stabilize, to train Iraqi troops. Then at night they come home, they come back to that post, that forward operating base, and they hammer out e-mails and blogs to those of us here to help combat the rhetoric coming out of Washington, DC.

General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker have a plan, the Baghdad Security Plan. We find out now much of Baghdad is more secure than it was. Most of the troops to carry out this plan just landed, just got there 2 weeks ago to start implementing the plan. I think that for us to second-guess is inappropriate. I think that it may be the fashionable thing to want to pull out.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey, a member of the Armed Services Committee, my friend and colleague, Mr. ANDREWS.

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

I support this legislation because it will make America safer. Our safety depends upon stability in Iraq.

Now, there are two ways to achieve stability in Iraq. The first is to prop up the present government and hope it succeeds.

□ 1415

That has failed. The best evidence of that failure is from Iraqi leaders themselves. Last weekend, a Shiite Member of Iraq's legislature said, in the absence of enough security forces, authorities should help residents arm themselves for their own protection. The Sunni president of Iraq said, people have a right to expect from the government and security agencies protection for their lives, land, honor and property, Mr. al-Hashemi said. But in the case of the inability of Iraqi security forces, the people have no choice but to take up their own defense.

This government has failed, and we are spending the precious blood of our sons and daughters to prop it up.

The second way to achieve stability in Iraq is to compel a political solution. This resolution will do that. It deserves our support.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I would start out with the title of this, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Positively Orwellian to name a resolution the Redeployment From Iraq Act. I have gone back and revisited George Orwell, and I can tell you this says, the Cut and Run From Iraq Act. And however you want to cut it, that's part of it.

Then it says, be moved in a safe and orderly manner. And I'd like to know from the other side, was the helicopter lifting people off of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, was that safe and orderly? Would that comply with your definition?

Another point, we have in this Congress constitutional responsibilities and authorities with regard to war. The first thing we can do in this Congress is declare war. The second thing we can do is to raise an army and a navy, and the third thing is to fund it, not to micromanage it. This is another piece of micromanagement. This is another piece of moving us down the path towards what history will record as a defeat on the floor of Congress, not a defeat in the field of battle.

Von Clausewitz said the object of war is to destroy the enemy's will and ability to conduct war. And we understand that if you don't have the will, it doesn't matter what your ability is. We're the only unchallenged super power in the world, and you're breaking down the will of the American people.

Sun Tzu said it more simply. ''Supreme excellence in warfare lies in destruction of your enemy's will to resist an advance of perceptible hostilities.'' And yet the American people's will has been systematically undermined by the debate here on this floor, by the debate in the national news media. And I question, in the face of the opposition that we have to our will here in this country, if we ever can manage the effort to rise up and defend freedom with this kind of support that we lack.

And then, when Mr. PRICE of Georgia lays out that the Defeatocrats in Congress are invested in defeat, the former gentleman from California rose up and squealed. And being the leading number one pork-producing district in America, I can tell you, when you throw a rock into the pigpen, the ones that squeal are the ones you hit.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 1 minute to my friend, my colleague, a gentleman who is a member of the Armed Services Committee, Mr. COURTNEY from Connecticut.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, during my work period at home, my district office in Norwich was visited by a young Army enlisted man who had in one hand his orders for his fourth deployment over the last 4 years. Over the last 4 years, he did two 1-year deployments in Iraq and one 7-month deployment in Afghanistan.

In his other hand he held a bag of medication, anti-anxiety medication, including Zoloft, because of the post-traumatic stress which we got actually diagnosed from a treating psychiatrist a few days later, which confirmed that his deployments have taken him to the breaking point. That is the dirty little secret about this surge policy, which is that we've broken the ground forces of this country.

This legislation crafted by Mr. SKELTON, whose number one focus as chairman of the Armed Services Committee is always about raising and maintaining an armed force that can protect our national interest, is desperately needed, primarily for the people who have borne the disproportionate share of this war, which is the people who serve in our uniform and their families.

It is easy for us to talk about commitment in this chamber. It's time to stand up for the real people who are sacrificing for that commitment.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend, my colleague, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER).

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I understand this or any administration's defensive posture when it comes to criticism of policy. And I understand the members of his party feeling the need to defend it. This interim report, ordinarily, I would be one who would wait until September. But this interim report that shows an appalling lack of progress on the political front in Iraq leads me to this conclusion.

I was on active duty for 4 years during Vietnam, and I went down to Vietnam Wall the other night; 50-something thousand dead American names down there. We have now, 3,500-plus dead American names on the Iraq wall.

And what was true then, to me, is true now. And General Petraeus himself said it not long ago when he said, military action is necessary, but any student of history recognizes that no military solution to a problem like

Iraq is there. Military action may be necessary, but it is not sufficient. There needs to be a political aspect.

The political aspect, as reported in this interim report, shows this: Of the 275 members of the Iraqi parliament, over one-third are presently boycotting meetings. Over one-third of the ministers are boycotting the meetings. Two years after the Iraqi elections, the government there is dysfunctional.

Now just listen to General Petraeus's words. We have to have a political aspect. And this present strategy, whether the surge works or not, is beside the point. These people are unwilling or unable to come together, after 2 years of a government, to work together to build any kind of civil society that we can support.

I think that it is now time, with this interim report and the lack of political progress there, to send a message. Nobody's talking about precipitous withdrawal. What we are talking about is this Congress engaging with this administration to support the troops and help them from this morass.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inquire as to the time remaining on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROSS). The gentleman from Arizona has 21 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from Missouri has 73 minutes remaining.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California, the former attorney general of California, Mr. LUNGREN.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, since I consider the gentleman from Missouri such a stalwart Member of this House, and a friend, I rise not in anger but in sorrow as I oppose his amendment. I have profound disagreements with the specifics of this particular bill.

I came to Congress, returned to Congress after 9/11 precisely because of 9/11, because I thought we needed, as a country, to respond to the threat of Islamofascism in an effective way and that we needed to recognize that our war against Islamofascism was a multifronted war. And one of the fronts of that war is Iraq. You can argue whether it's the number one front or not, but it is important. And I think everyone would agree. And what we do there is important. And how we act there is important. And when we withdraw, even though we call it a redeployment, that is important. It is a message that goes beyond Iraq. It goes to all of those who would do us ill in this world.

And I can't understand, when we had General Petraeus look us in the eye just a couple of weeks ago and say to Members, I believe in my mission; I've told my men and my women that I believe in the mission; and if I didn't believe in it, I would tell you immediately because I'm not going to sacrifice men and women in vain. And he said, give me the time to do it. And we said, yes, sir, you have the time. And now we say, when he's over there with his men and women, we're not going to give you the time. We're going to second guess.

I don't understand how you prosecute a war. One Member got up and said, let's end this war by passing this resolution. You end a war usually in America by winning, by defeating the enemy.

We have this bill up now. We're going to have a bill up in another couple of weeks that's going to tell us we have to change the habeas corpus issue, we have to grant habeas corpus to unlawful enemy combatants, for the first time in the history of our Nation, putting us at a position that we never would have had in World War II. It would have crippled us during World War II.

And then we're going to hear, close down Guantanamo. Let's look at this bill as just a piece of the approach that the other side is taking.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS).

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. The responsible redeployment of our troops is a brave step toward a new direction for the war in Iraq. It will remove our troops from the most dangerous kill zones in Iraq and refocus our efforts toward defeating terrorism across the globe.

The decision to redeploy is one that I have not come to lightly. This bill gives the President the power to maintain a military presence in the region while, at the same time, imposing the accountability the American people demand that we enforce.

Four years into a difficult and prolonged engagement, I had hoped we would have seen better proposals for progress in quelling the violence. Throughout the course of our debate, whether on the air waves, Internet or in the halls of Congress, we've heard much of the supposed failures of our military goals. We hear often of continued strife and instability in the nation we sought to set free; of an Iraqi economy crippled by the trials of war; of parliamentary disputes, civil unrest and sectarian violence; and of a peace we all believe in that has yet to take place in Iraq.

But these stories, however true, are only a portion of our efforts. They are the darkest side of our endeavors meant to do good and sinfully omit the triumphs and victories of our sons and daughters who've done a great service.

For all that remains undone, our troops have accomplished a great deal. We brought free and open elections to a nation once shackled by a tyrannical regime. Iraq has experienced freedoms unimagined before, and Saddam Hussein was put to death for his crimes.

It is in this vein that we must continue our presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, the greater Middle East and around the world, for it is essential to our security.

As we prepare to redeploy our troops from Iraq, we must commit as well to remain ever vigilant in the face of terrorism. Whether they are threats to America and her allies, whether radicalism threatens the foundations of the natural freedoms we've sought so hard to prove, we must prepare ourselves to face those threats and bring their agents either to justice or a swift demise.

We must continue our hunt for Osama Bin Laden and the instruments of al Qaeda. While I am behind the efforts to redeploy, our military must be equipped and prepared to protect American civilians, property and interests at home and abroad.

As I prepared my case today on the merits of redeployment, I was reminded of a speech delivered by Congressman Abraham Lincoln on January 12, 1848, that railed against President James K. Polk of Tennessee for bringing our country to war with Mexico. Lincoln believed that Polk had stretched the facts to fit the case for war, just as many have expressed their belief here that our President stretched the truth about WMDs to make his case for war.

President Polk's war with Mexico yielded the borders that stand today. Our nations endured the battle of Vera Cruz, the battle of Mexico City, but the results of the Mexican-American war remain, and our two countries live as partners in peace. The results of the war yielded positive results. History has favorably judged James K. Polk, just as history will judge this President.

So as the President considers signing the order to redeploy, I hope he will. I implore him to consider the advice of Mr. Lincoln.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I thank him for his outstanding leadership on this floor and within the Republican Study Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to come to the floor today and debate this resolution with my fellow members of the Republican Study Committee. But if press reports are to be believed, I am disturbed by the reason that we are here, and that is, is this a poll driven resolution?

We all know that our Democratic colleagues now have one of the lowest congressional approval ratings in almost 50 years. We know they don't want to spend time on this floor debating how little has been achieved in their tenure, and perhaps they want to spend even less time talking about what they have achieved; the single largest tax increase in American history, a secret earmarking plan gone awry, and a spendorama, spending millions and millions on peanut storage, NASA and dairy products, put into a

bill to support our troops in harm's way.

□ 1430

Putting polls aside, why are we here? Make no mistake about it. What we are debating today is whether or not to declare defeat in Iraq, the battlefront in our war against radical Islam.

Everyone knows that fighting this battle in Iraq is costly, but losing this battle in Iraq is even costlier.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes life presents us with lousy options, but that is a reality with which we must deal. Iraq must be seen in the larger context of our war with radical Islam. The battle lines are drawn; and whether or not we like it, they are drawn in Iraq.

Don't take my word for it. Take the word of Osama bin Laden: ''The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad. Success in Baghdad will be success for the United States. Failure in Iraq is the failure of the United States. Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all of their wars.'' And we have to soberly reflect upon the enemy that we are facing. Listen to the number two in al Qaeda, al Zawahiri: ''Al Qaeda has the right to kill 4 million Americans, 2 million of them children.''

Mr. Speaker, two of those children are my children. And I take this very, very seriously.

Al Qaeda has further vowed to expel the Americans from Iraq. They have vowed that they will ''launch a jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.''

Again, this is the enemy we face and we face him foremost in Iraq. If we leave Iraq before subduing him, he will follow us here to our shores. And make no mistake about it. The consequences are immense. Read the National Intelligence Estimate. Read the report of the Iraq Study Group. Precipitous withdrawal declaring defeat will not end this war. Instead, it will make it worse. It will send it to neighboring countries. It may lead to genocide.

Now, I have listened to the debate of my colleagues carefully. Some still complain about the decision to go in. It's a moot point. Many want to complain about mistakes or incompetence of 3 years, 2 years, or perhaps 1 year ago that may or may not be accurate. Today they are irrelevant.

The question is what do we do now? We have a new commander. We have a new strategy. We have a report due in September. We have signs of hope. Let's give it a chance. There is too much at stake to declare defeat today.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland, my friend (Mr. GILCHREST).

Mr. GILCHREST. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding.

The question before us today is if failure in Iraq is not an option and staying the course is not working, what are our options? It is vital that we focus our attention this morning and this afternoon on that question, then formulate an integrated set of proposals that include the basic premise that a stable Iraq and a stable Middle East is in the vital interest of the United States and the international community, also taking into consideration here the military's assertion, through General Petraeus, that the war cannot be won with a military alone. An integrated set of proposals for an overall strategy then must include, which is in this bill before us today, diplomatic efforts, political efforts, economic efforts, social, humanitarian, cultural, and a military component. We must also garner the constructive engagement of all of Iraq's neighbors.

When Nixon went to China, the domino theory of Vietnam became irrelevant. When Nixon went to China, there was a Sino-Soviet split that advantaged the United States. If we go to Iran, al Qaeda in Iraq will be irrelevant. If we go to Iran, the idea of a spread of terrorism, of those problems in the Middle East will be eliminated.

The idea that this piece of legislation moves forward in the next step of the Iraq Study Group is, in my judgment, on the right mark. It is profound. And I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding and for bringing this legislation to the floor.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WESTMORELAND).

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona for yielding, and I want to thank the gentleman from Missouri for being an honorable gentleman during this tough time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start with a couple of warnings. First, I would suggest anyone on the Republican side shaking hands with the majority might want to be careful because they have been licking their fingers and sticking them into the political wind.

Second, government opinion by polls may lead to short-term success at the ballot box, but in this case it could lead to a catastrophe on a global scale.

We in this House best serve the United States, Iraq, and the world community if we establish conditions in Iraq that allow for a somewhat orderly transition to autonomy for Iraqis. A quick withdrawal from Iraq would set off a fuse that would eventually blow up not only Iraq but quite possibly surrounding countries as well.

Iraq foreign minister on Monday warned against a quick withdrawal by the United States, saying, ''The dangers could be a civil war dividing the country, regional wars, and the collapse of the state.''

Today when we talk about the Holocaust or when we talk about Rwanda or when we talk about the Sudan, we ask how could good people stand by and let this happen. It is an important lesson to remember as we pull out our voting cards today. Remember, we are trying to help. If we pull out of Iraq, we guarantee that the Tigris and the Euphrates will run red with the blood of innocents. We guarantee a safe haven for the training camps of al Qaeda. We guarantee more free rein for the death squads of Moqtada al Sadr. We guarantee a civil war between Shiites and Sunnis. We guarantee even more or worse instability in the region, perhaps for decades.

No matter how we vote today, we are not going to stop the war. We may stop fighting, but we are not going to stop the war. As Indonesian jihadist leader Abu Bakar Bashir said, ''All Muslims should fight to create an Islamic state. There are only two options for Muslims, to win or to die.''

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my colleague and friend, the gentlewoman from California, member of the Armed Services Committee (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ).

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

I rise today as a cosponsor of H.R. 2956, and although I support this resolution, I must express my sadness that it has come to this point.

This President was wrong when he claimed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. He has had over 4 years. He has asked for more time, for more troops, for more surges. And regardless of what our military experts and our troops on the ground say, this President continues to claim that we are winning the war in Iraq.

Mr. President, what reports are you reading? Whom are you listening to? Certainly not the reports that I have read or the military officials I have spoken to, who tell a very different story about what is happening in Iraq. To me it is with sadness that this Congress has to tell you that your war in Iraq is a failure and that we will not let you leave our brave men and women over there when you have no plan to allow them to succeed. We will not let them be targets any longer.

History will show, Mr. President, that your war was a failure. But today the Congress stood up to you and said enough is enough.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague and friend from the leadership, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON).

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. SKELTON for yielding me this time.

They buried Andre Craig, 24 years old, last week. He died in the service of his country. His family held a press conference prior to that and said, he was exhausted.

Mr. SKELTON has put forward a piece of legislation, not a resolution, a bill that address the men and women in the armed services, that addresses the problems that they face on a daily basis in Iraq.

There is a difficult choice today to be made. Our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are honorable people. They understand as well exactly what it is

like to go to a funeral service, to look into the eyes of these families, many who have been deployed three and four times, who are stretched to the maximum. You know what they are experiencing. It is hard to reconcile, because we know you are honorable people, the indifference that seems to lie in the choice between the blind loyalty to the worst foreign policy endeavor in the history of the country and the men and women who are there paying for it every single day. You are right, emotions run deep.

How many more of these services will it take for us to face the truth and the facts? People have come to this floor and said, well, you know that the President is going to veto this. One thing we know for sure is where the President stands and what he has said he will do and how this will be passed on to another administration. But the thing here is what we will do, what you will do.

Find your voice. Speak on behalf of the troops. Follow IKE SKELTON.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague, a member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES).

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. I thank the chairman for this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2956.

For more than 4 years, our men and women in uniform have faithfully, skillfully served in Iraq. This legislation makes clear that the Government of Iraq must now be responsible for Iraq's future.

Mr. Speaker, when Marine General ''Jack'' Sheehan, a former top NATO commander, declined to serve the White House as war czar for Afghanistan and Iraq, he stated his reasons for not accepting this position: ''The very fundamental issue is they don't know where the hell they're going.'' That is what Marine Corps GEN Jack Sheehan said. General Sheehan's statement is why the Congress and the administration need to work together to develop an end point to the war strategy in Iraq. It is time for Congress to meet its constitutional responsibility by defining what victory in Iraq will look like.

Stay the course is not the answer. As Colin Powell said last week, ''We have to face the reality of the situation that is on the ground and not what we would want it to be. It is not a civil war that can be put down or solved by the Armed Forces of the United States.'' Colin Powell, I quoted him. That is his statement.

We are now in the 5th year in Iraq, and 3,611 Americans have died in the war. Mr. Speaker, to this date I have sent over 6,400 letters to the families and extended families of our men and women in the military who have lost their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq, and every time I sign a letter, my heart aches.

Chairman SKELTON's plan provides a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance the diplomatic, political, and economic components of United States national security interests in Iraq. It has taken this country in a direction that it needs to consider.

Mr. Speaker, I close by reminding this Congress what Rudyard Kipling said in his writings known as ''Epitaphs of War,'' and we need to all be responsible for this, and this is my quote from him: ''If any question why we died, tell them because our fathers lied.''

□ 1445

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished Member of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. GRESHAM BARRETT.

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I hope the chairman of the Armed Services Committee knows how much I respect him and truly love this man.

Mr. Speaker, I know of no other place than Washington, DC, where it's okay to look a man in the face, tell him we're going to give him the time, the resources and everything he needs to accomplish a mission, and then halfway through the process, say, oops, I'm sorry, time's up. We made a mistake. Mission over.

No one person I know or have known executing this war on radical Islam has more credibility than David Petraeus, a gentleman who was confirmed unanimously in the United States Senate, but instead of giving GEN David Petraeus, a man whose boots are on the ground, a fair opportunity and allowing him the time he needs to better implement the plan and report back, we once again see legislators trying to micromanage this war. The problem is, we've turned this into a political war, a war where politicians are pulling the strings, not the man we said could do it.

If anyone can pull this off, David Petraeus can. If any armed services in the world can be successful, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces can. But let them accomplish the mission. Let them continue to win. Let them bring us victory.

In recent weeks, we've witnessed in Great Britain how real the threat remains. Whether we're talking about Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the enemy is there, the enemy is real; and to ignore the threat that they pose to this Nation is unconscionable.

We owe it to our troops on the ground, to those who have served, to those who have died, and the American people to allow the plan General Petraeus developed to take effect.

Mr. Speaker, the stakes are too high. Keep this country safe. Keep this country strong. Do the courageous thing. Vote against this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 1 minute to the chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the Armed Services Committee, Mrs. DAVIS of California.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2956.

I just returned from Iraq. The trip was only a snapshot of what was happening on the ground, but I heard two messages: One, we need more time to train Iraqi troops and leadership; but two, progress is not evident. We are taking two steps back for every step forward. Our men and women are serving heroically, but it is clear our progress is limited, at best. So where do we go from here?

Mr. Speaker, we need a plan that moves beyond the surge to a time frame that says we will continue to support Iraqis in a limited capacity but that we will redeploy the bulk of our forces within a prescribed period of time.

We are all concerned about the impact our redeployment could have on our adversaries, and the region as a whole. However, the reality on the ground is that, whether it's in 6 months or 2 years, the size of our current force cannot be sustained. The true focus must be on how we disengage, how we and our allies work together to support our aims for a free and open society in Iraq.

Our choices are bad, awful and worse. But this legislation, I believe, will move us a step closer to a day when Iraq's leaders and politicians can take back control of their country and our men and women can return home to their families and a grateful Nation.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I am very pleased to yield 5½ minutes to the distinguished Republican whip, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and for the effort he and others are making on the floor here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to this editorial today from the Washington Post which says, ''It seems like just weeks ago''—because it was that—''that Congress approved funding for the war in Iraq and instructed General David Petraeus to report back on the war's progress in September. Before Congress begins ordering withdrawals, they should at least give those generals the months they asked for to see whether their strategy can offer some help.'' Mr. Speaker, I think that, in a nutshell, sums up what we ought to be talking about today instead of what we are talking about today.

I've heard this resolution referred to as a ''new way forward,'' but it doesn't provide a new way forward. It, frankly, serves no purpose in meeting the challenge that we face today with our totalitarian enemies.

I'm told that, yesterday, in the House Appropriations Committee, 45 minutes was spent debating whether cats should be declawed before they were allowed into public housing; 45 minutes to decide whether cats should be declawed in public housing, and by the way, that committee decided they should, and no minutes spent to talk

about this bill. No hearing on an April 1 deadline. No outside testimony on a bill that was quickly put together to serve a purpose of, I believe, changing the subject of the failure of this Congress to get its other work done back to a subject that is obviously creating stress in America today, and that is, what do we do about the totalitarian enemies we face and their lack of appreciation for innocent human life?

Commanders in the field say that a responsible deployment from Iraq would take at least a year. Maybe that's why we didn't have a hearing on how long it would take to responsibly and safely leave Iraq. There was no testimony from the military about an April 1 deadline. In fact, I can't even find any evidence of any consultation with the military about an April 1 deadline.

And what does ''limited presence'' on page three of this, what does that mean? What does ''limited presence'' mean? I suppose it means whatever it needs to mean when you go home and explain why you voted for the bill, because it doesn't mean anything. Limited presence means nothing, and it's a key criteria of this approach.

The same people who say we went into Iraq without a well thought-out plan now want to leave without a plan at all. And that's what is wrong with what we're talking about today.

Let's go back to page three of the bill itself. The President is supposed to report back in January things like the projected number of armed forces necessary to carry out the missions. The projected annual cost of the missions. The projected duration of the missions, I guess to suggest that there really aren't going to be missions if you leave April 1 if you've been on the other side of this issue up to now, if a few weeks ago you were for giving the generals in the field up until September, and now you're for deciding what we're going to be doing in April without knowing what that September situation is about.

And it goes on, on page 3, to talk about whether it's necessary, I guess defining the missions, whether it's necessary to have Armed Forces to carry out the following missions; protecting United States diplomatic facilities and United States citizens, including members of the Armed Forces who are engaged in carrying out other missions. You can pretty much make this, I guess, whatever you want it to. Serving in rolls consistent with customary diplomatic positions. Engaging in actions to disrupt and eliminate al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations.

Now, we're going to decide, apparently the President should decide in January whether that continues to be an important thing, or whether training and equipping members of the Iraqi Armed Forces continues to be an important thing.

Where was the effort made to determine the impact on al Qaeda worldwide, or to determine the impact on Hezbollah or other agents of terror and how that would affect our security in the United States if we precipitously leave one more time, if we precipitously leave without a plan?

Only a few weeks ago, again, as others have verified all over the country in editorials today, I and others stood on this floor and said, our troops deserve a funding bill without strings and without congressional pork. Today, I'm here to say that they deserve a chance to carry out their mission without looking over their shoulder all the time to see what the Congress of the United States is about to do next.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from Texas, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to Mr. SKELTON, the outstanding Congressman from Missouri.

I rise to support H.R. 2956. If we could stop this war today, it would please my constituents. And if we could do it without more violence, I would be picketing to do it.

All of us know, that have any common sense, that we cannot bring the troops home today, but we can develop a good strategy to make sure that they get the message in Iraq that we are coming home. We still have 150,336 troops over there. Are we going to stay until they all get killed?

We talk about how many have lost lives. I was a nurse in the Veterans' Administration for 15 years, and I saw the damaged lives of these veterans coming home from war. What are we doing for ourselves and the future? This is not a partisan issue, this is an issue that saves America.

Mr. Speaker, the most recent report from the Department of Defense, states there are 150,336 brave American troops in the middle of a violent civil war in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the President has repeatedly made it clear that nothing will discourage him from pursuing a war that has no end in sight.

Congress cannot and should not keep waiting for the President to change course.

We must change the course ourselves, 2008 must be a year of transition in Iraq. Iraq has to grow out of the shadow of the United States.

Iraq needs to take responsibility for its own decisions, learn from its own mistakes, and find its own solutions to its own problems.

Recently, the Iraq Study Group suggested that the time has since passed when one country alone could work alongside the Iraqi leadership to steer Iraq's future.

Rather, as the report says, "the United States should immediately launch a New Diplomatic Offensive to build an international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region."

This recommendation is perhaps the last-best hope for war weary Iraqis and Americans alike.

Mr. Speaker, our brave men and women are serving with great honor in Iraq. Their service has paved the way for a democratic society.

It is time for the Iraqi government to stand up, so our troops can begin to stand-down.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. I yield 2 minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN).

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Speaker, two separate headlines on the front page of today's Washington Post tell the sad story of two of the Bush Administration's biggest national security failures. First, its disastrous Iraq policy, and second, its failure to complete the mission against al Qaeda and the Taliban along the Afghan/Pakistan border.

One headline reads, ''CIA Said Instability Appeared Irreversible.'' The article describes how, on the same day last November, the Baker-Hamilton commission received two starkly different portrayals of what was happening in Iraq. One came from President Bush, who portrayed a rosy picture, and the other came from the man who President Bush put in charge of the CIA, General Hayden, who was responsible for providing a clear-eyed analysis based on cold facts. And what he reportedly told the commission was, and I quote, ''Instability of the Iraqi Government was irreversible.'' Irreversible, he said.

These starkly different portrayals of the situation go to the core of our problems in Iraq because the President has been in a state of denial. Happy talk is no substitute for a reality-based policy. And indeed, the President's decisions based on wishful thinking have led to decisions that have weakened our national security.

Yesterday, the U.S. intelligence experts confirmed the gloomy assessment that General Hayden made last November, and today's report to Congress confirms that the Iraqi Government has failed to make sufficient progress in key areas of national reconciliation.

The other headline on the front page of the paper today on Washington Post reads, ''U.S. warns of stronger al Qaeda and describes al Qaeda's growing presence and strength along the Afghan/Pakistan border and reveals the consequences of our failure to complete the job against al Qaeda in that area.''

Mr. Speaker, we must insist that the Iraqis assume greater responsibility for their own future, and we redouble our efforts against those who did attack us on September 11, 2001. That's what this bill is about.

It's time to change direction. I urge my colleagues to adopt this bill.

Mr. SHADEGG. I note the gentleman cited the Washington Post. I wonder if he has read the editorial today which says that we should be giving our troops at least until September.

Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Arizona has 5½ minutes remaining.

Mr. SHADEGG. I thank the Speaker.

I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to a distinguished member of the Republican Study Committee, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY).

□ 1500

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I want to take my 2 minutes to apologize to a few families from my district for having to listen, once again, to the Democratic leadership bringing forward a cut-and-run policy when these families have given their loved ones in this sacrifice.

I apologize to the Johnson family of Armuchee, Georgia, who sacrificed their son, Justin. I apologize to the Saylor family from Bremen, Georgia, who gave up their son, Paul. I apologize to the Clayton family of Marietta, who misses dearly their son, Captain Hayes Clayton. To Carey and Sally Brown, of Atlanta, I apologize to you for the loss of your son, Tyler. From my wife's hometown of Newnan, Georgia, I express my regret to Robert Stokely for the death of his son, Mike. Finally, I apologize to the widow of Jack Hensley from Marietta, a beheaded contract worker.

Mr. Speaker, what an appalling thing to do to these families, whose sons gave the last full measure of devotion defending liberty and fighting the terrorist Islamic extremists, to pull the rug out from under them and say: We are not going to give victory a chance. We are not even willing to wait until September. I think that it is appalling. I am ashamed of the Democratic leadership. I apologize to these families from my district who have given so much.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to others in the second person.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE), a friend and colleague.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank Chairman SKELTON for yielding, but also for his commitment to our Armed Forces, as the daughter, Mr. SKELTON, of a 25-year Army veteran who loves you dearly and thanks you for supporting our troops.

As a cofounder of the Out of Iraq Caucus, I rise in support of this bill. The President has dug us deep into a hole in Iraq. By setting a clear timeline for the redeployment of United States troops, we are standing with the American people to stop the digging. If we are to climb out of this deep hole, we are going to have to make sure that when our troops come home that they all come home. That means no permanent bases. It means ending our blind commitment to arming and training Iraqi security forces. It also means that come September, we must use the power of our purse, and we must begin to fully fund the safe redeployment of our young men and women and our contractors out of Iraq.

The civil war in Iraq is raging within the very security forces we are arming and training. Our weapons and expertise are being used for sectarian violence and for killing Americans and Iraqi civilians. This policy only further endangers our troops and fuels a civil war.

We must end the Bush administration's failed policy in Iraq. It has failed. We must reconsider this blind commitment to arming and training Iraqi security forces.

Let us support our troops, and I mean support our troops in a real way, by bringing them home. This is the will of the American people. That is the goal of the Out of Iraq Caucus. That is in the national security interests of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the chairman, once again, for his leadership and for yielding.

Mr. SHADEGG. Mr. Speaker, at this time it is my privilege to yield the balance of our time to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), a member of the Republican Study Committee and the ranking member on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I thank my colleague from Arizona for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as I listen to the debate today, I end up having a lot of more questions than I have answers. I have a question as to whether my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that the threat from radical jihadism is real or not. Have they read the latest Zawahiri statement, ''Advice of One Concerned,'' where he goes on to say in the statement, a global system, whose center and heart is the United States and the European Union? As for the rest of the states of the world, they are the outlying states.

It goes on to say, the strategy of al Qaeda, the only way to confront them, the core states, according to al Qaeda's theory, is by taking the war from the outlying states to the central states, in which case the damage and consequences of this damage will all take place in the central states.

Have they not read the other documents that come from al Qaeda that talk about what their strategy is? Their number one goal and objective is to defeat the United States and the coalition in Iraq, then to move out into the region and destabilize the other countries in the region, eliminate the State of Israel, establish the caliphate, Southern Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East, stretch down into Asia and then establish Sharia law.

Do my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe that radical Islam is a threat to the security of the United States and our allies, or not? If they don't, perhaps pulling out of Iraq is a good strategy. If they do believe that radical jihadism is a threat to the United States, if they do believe that looking at the reports in London, in Europe that radical jihadists actually have attacked in those places and that they may be attacking in the United States or planning to attack in the United States, the question becomes, if you are not willing to fight the threat of radical jihadism in Iraq, where will you engage radical jihadism, in other parts of the Middle East? Should we deploy our troops to other parts of the Middle East? Maybe we should just write off the Middle East and deploy into Northern Africa or into Western Europe, or maybe what we should do is bring them all home and redeploy them here in the United States, because they will follow us home.

So the question is, if you do believe it is a threat, where and when will you confront the threat that we face? Others have pointed it out. I have taken a look and read this resolution. I encourage all of the American people to read this bill. What does it say? Very, very little. It says that we will commence reductions of our troops. Commence reductions.

Exactly how many do you want to commence reducing? 100? 5,000? 50,000? Then by April 1 there will be a plan for a limited presence. What is ''limited presence''? There are some that would say that the number of troops we have today is a limited presence, because they may not be enough to get the job done. But the bill doesn't define where we go. This is no plan.

If this is the way forward, we are in big, big trouble, because it doesn't recognize the threat and it doesn't have a plan as to how we are going to move forward.

But there are other things that this Congress should be debating. As our minority whip said, we debated for 45 minutes as to whether cats should be declawed before moving into public housing.

The previous question that was defeated earlier today would have enabled us to deal with a real issue, and that is the modernization of FISA, our ability to listen to radical jihadists in other parts of the world as they are communicating their plans and intentions. Today, there is a massive loophole in FISA for radical jihadists who are outside of the United States to communicate, and our intelligence community is prohibited from listening to them. We provide them the full protection of American law, even though they are not United States citizens, even though they are outside of the United States, and even though they are radical jihadists. Let us fix this problem, and let's make sure that we fix it before we go home in August. We should have done it today.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my dear friend and colleague from California (Ms. WATERS).

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman Ike Skelton for getting us to this point today, 1,581 days, 53 months, over 4 years since this President led this Nation to war in Iraq; 3,600 American soldiers killed, 27,000 American soldiers seriously injured, 60,000 to 100,000 Iraqis killed; $10 billion per month, $500 billion American dollars spent on this war.

A civil war is raging in Iraq; there is no credible government in Iraq; Iraq is

totally destabilized and Iraq refugees are flooding into neighboring countries; there is no coalition of the willing supporting the U.S. in this war; and we are well on our way to destabilizing the entire Middle East.

President Bush and the chief architect of this war, Vice President DICK CHENEY, are in denial about the disastrous mess they have created. Some of us have known for quite some time this war must end. BARBARA LEE, LYNN WOOLSEY and I and several other Members of Congress created the Out of Iraq Caucus over 2 years ago. We organized this caucus, but we were dismissed as bleeding heart liberals.

It has taken too long to get to this point we are at today. This bill will at least demand a strategy to get us out of Iraq and a deadline will be set. This has been a long time in coming.

However, Mr. Speaker, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. President Bush will apply all kinds of pressure, threaten, mislead, spend us blind and continue to pursue this immoral war, unless we decide that we are not going to fund this war anymore.

In the words of the people on the street who are organized against this war, Mr. President, not another nickel, not another dime, not another soldier, not this time.

Vote for this bill. It is a good start. And remember, in the final analysis, we have got to defund this war.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) controls 40 minutes.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK).

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2956. The battle in Iraq has left many of us frustrated, and rightly so. Progress is not as fast as most of us would like it to be.

Some in this House believe that we have lost the war and should withdraw immediately. Okay, so what happens then? We leave, then what? Does al Qaeda leave us alone? Can we disband the Department of Homeland Security? Can we announce that the threat from radical jihadism has ended?

These are the questions that aren't being discussed. Why? Because the answers are difficult. We need a long-term strategy that goes against the political pandering that is preventing us from achieving long-term national security.

As cochair of the House Antiterrorism Caucus, I have heard warnings that a withdrawal will only embolden al Qaeda and other radical Islamic jihad groups. They will carry out more suicide bombing attacks, behead more innocent Iraqi people, intimidate and suppress and ultimately recruit peace-loving Muslims around the world to their cause. And what happens to those Muslims who resist the radical jihadists? They will be killed.

This is not just my view. This is what the Islamists have been saying, and, more importantly, doing for the past few years. Muslims in the Middle East do not have freedom of religion and expression, as we do here. And while it is convenient to blame America for the problems in the Muslim world, we are afraid to place the blame on those who have caused those problems.

I believe passage of this bill will be a huge mistake in our long-term national strategy and security interests, and it must be defeated.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague from Ohio (Mr. WILSON).

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides a plan for responsible redeployment of our troops. This is the time to set a new course. Setting a date certainly gives the Iraqis the incentive to actually work to meet some benchmarks.

Our military men and women are among our most precious resources. They are performing admirably with courage in a situation that they never should have been asked to be in in the first place. They are doing their job. Now we must do ours. We must bring them home.

On a recent trip to Walter Reed to visit a seriously wounded marine from my district in Pomeroy, Ohio, I saw again the damage this war has done. Not just to this young man, but to his family also. They have all put their jobs and their lives on hold to care for him.

His courage and conviction are not in question. That marine would go back to Iraq tomorrow if we asked him to. We must not ask. How much more blood should be shed? How many more families must we shatter? Enough is enough.

□ 1515

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield at this time 5 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON). The distinguished gentleman has been the chairman in the past of the Terrorism Subcommittee and is an expert on special operations.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise with great respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the author of this bill, but with strong opposition to H.R. 2956.

Mr. Speaker, the short title of this bill is the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.'' But, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not responsible. It is irresponsible. This bill is an irresponsible political act that will put our troops in danger and will result in catastrophic consequences for the United States, for the Iraqi people, for Israel, for the greater Middle Eastern region, and for the rest of the world.

As The Washington Post said in this morning's paper, this bill is being considered today for ''reasons having more to do with American politics than with Iraqi reality.''

We must oppose this bill for numerous reasons, but let me mention just three. First, this bill fails to highlight the consequences of reducing our force levels too early. Such consequences would have a devastating effect on Iraq, would embolden al Qaeda in Iran, and would have severe security impacts on Israel and throughout the Middle East.

Al Qaeda and its proxies are engaged in a jihad against the United States and against the West. Al Qaeda's second in command, al Zawahiri, reaffirmed in a July 4 speech an al Qaeda plan to use Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia for jihadi planning and training against us.

Second, instead of putting forward legislation that offers an alternative to the plan being implemented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, this political ploy calls for a vague ''troop reduction'' to be a ''limited presence'' in a ''safe and orderly manner'' within 120 days; but it fails to define any of these terms.

Specifically, this bill does not define what ''limited presence'' means. Does it mean 50,000 troops or 100,000 troops or 137,000 troops? What is a limited presence? No one knows. This is not a serious bill; it is a political bill.

Third, the bill requires the President to address whether it is necessary for our Armed Forces to carry out missions such as, listen to this, protecting diplomatic facilities and U.S. citizens, whether it is necessary to carry out acts like acting to disrupt or eliminate al Qaeda, or if it is necessary to carry out acts including training and equipping members of Iraqi security forces. Let me ask my friends on the other side of the aisle, for goodness sake, what else would we do there?

It is illogical to ask whether these missions are necessary and only proves once again that this bill is a political tool and not an alternative plan.

There are also two other points that my colleagues should consider. First, the situation in Iraq is not conducive to a force reduction. As an example of why this is true, the British have indicated their intent to draw down and have pulled back to the Basra airport. And as a result, Basra is now in the center of a power struggle between Shiite elements and tribal leaders over control of oil and political power. Local governance control has fractured along militia lines because of a British redeployment like the ones we are talking about in this bill.

Second, we need to remind ourselves of what happened in Beirut and Afghanistan when forces precipitously withdrew there. In October 1983, our Marine barracks in Beirut was bombed by Hezbollah with support from Iran. We withdrew our Marines in February 1984, and by that April, the remainder of the peacekeeping force had followed. That civil war continued until 1990 and Hezbollah emerged as a much stronger force, which to this day threatens the West. We should ask ourselves: Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of Hezbollah and the influence of Tehran

had we not had a precipitous withdrawal like the one provided for in this bill?

Second, in the 1980s, the Afghan resistance built momentum by recruiting Muslim fighters to wage jihad against the Soviets. The Soviet withdrawal of 1989 was followed by a civil war and the collapse of the government. The Taliban rose in 1993 and gained control of Afghanistan.

In 1996, bin-Laden moved to Afghanistan where he forged an alliance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. What followed were al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center, Khobar Towers, the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the USS *Cole*, and then September 11th. My colleagues, ask yourself this: "Could the U.S. have prevented the rise of al-Qaeda by responding to these threats?"

I want to urge my colleagues to keep in mind that the world is watching how the United States handles this tough challenge in Iraq. If we concede defeat and retreat, we will send a strong message of weakness and inability to remain committed to our allies and to our enemies.

Tom Friedman noted in the New York Times this week that our withdrawal will mean "more ethnic, religious and tribal killings across Iraq," adding, "it will be one of the most morally ugly scenes you can imagine, no less than Darfur." The Post today also stated that a withdrawal will result in a "full-blown civil war, conflicts spreading beyond Iraq's borders, or genocide." Picture the Iraqis who have helped us, picture them watch as we prepare to leave and picture them clinging to our vehicles in fear of their very lives as we start down the road from Baghdad.

I believe this reckless abandonment of the mission in Iraq would send a clear message to the Iraqi people, our allies, and potential partners around the world that Americans are weak and cannot be trusted. In this world of transnational terrorism and proliferation we can not afford to stand alone.

It is critical that we give General Petraeus the months we gave him to implement his strategy, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this dangerous bill. In this case national security should trump national politics.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds all Members to direct their remarks to the Chair, and not to others in the second person.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to an energetic new Member, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE).

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

On January 10, President Bush announced an increase of more than 20,000 troops in Iraq. Six months later, it is clear that the President's surge strategy has yielded no positive results, and Iraq continues to remain a battleground for sectarian violence and a hotbed for terrorist activity.

But in spite of the realities on the ground, the President seems intent on further digging in his heels on a failed policy that has placed targets on the backs of our troops as they attempt to referee a civil war. In the 6 months that I have served in Congress, the 17th Congressional District of Illinois has mourned the lives of six brave soldiers. In the absence of any visible progress, we can no longer stand by as more of our troops come home in body bags.

Mr. Speaker, President Bush started this war without a plan to win the peace. For the sake of our troops, our national security and our credibility around the world, this Congress must do what this President refuses to do in order to return stability to Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY).

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, as I read this resolution, I can't help but think ''there they go again.''

With approval ratings of Congress near record lows, the majority leadership searches the polls for any issue they can use to political advantage. Unfortunately, their attempt to improve their standing comes at the expense of troops on the ground and our country's security.

Of course the American people are concerned about the course of events in Iraq. Of course they mourn each loss. Of course they want our troops to come home as soon as possible. Of course they do, because we all do.

But responsible leadership does not permit pandering to polls and understandable emotions without facing up to the real consequences of the vote. And by the way, putting the word ''responsible'' in the title of a bill does not make it so. It is an understandable, though I believe misguided, position to require an immediate withdrawal of forces from Iraq. This resolution, though, is an attempt to play politics with the issue and avoid responsibility for the consequences that come from its aftermath.

Requiring withdrawal on a congressionally mandated timetable abandons those who have worked with us, invites chaos and more death in Iraq and increases the risk to our security here at home. No one should be able to stick his or her head in the sand and ignore those consequences.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that what goes on in this Chamber with resolutions like this is encouraging to our adversaries and makes the job of our troops on the ground even harder than it needs to be. How can it possibly be responsible to declare failure when all of our troops have only been in Iraq for just about exactly 1 month today. This struggle and the broader war against radical Islamist terrorists will require the best of us, and that requires doing our constitutional duty. This resolution is far from the best we can do.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to a very thoughtful colleague, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), 2 minutes.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2956, which would compel a responsible exit of U.S. troops from Iraq.

I voted against giving the President the authority to go to war in Iraq. Two years ago, BRAD MILLER and I introduced legislation to terminate the authorization and to require of the President a comprehensive exit strategy. The President has responded to calls for change by stubbornly adhering to a failed strategy that has cost our Nation dearly in blood, treasure and moral authority. He has rejected Congress's constitutional role in determining policy, and he has ignored the will of the American people. This obstinate, irresponsible, destructive course must not continue.

Now, the President has put great stock in the recent surge in U.S. forces, but the surge seems mainly to have shifted the locus of the fighting. The intent was to create space for Iraq's political leaders to make the hard choices that will lead their country forward, but those hard choices are not being made. We can no longer leave our foreign policy at the mercy of sectarian and political forces we cannot control.

A mission of simply biding time, at great cost in blood and treasure, is not one that we can or should support. We must begin to bring our troops home.

Yet, as I and many others have repeatedly argued, it not only matters that we leave Iraq, but it also matters greatly how we leave. We cannot afford the same mistakes that the Bush administration made in entering Iraq, without a plan for protecting troops, for managing consequences or for giving the Iraqi people every possible chance to succeed.

Therefore, the bill before us would provide the discipline of a timeline to the Bush administration for beginning and completing the termination of combat operations and the redeployment of our troops. It would also compel the development of a comprehensive strategy for managing the redeployment and addressing the challenges that Iraq will continue to present after our troops are gone.

Mr. Speaker, the continued presence of 160,000 American troops in Iraq is not sustainable and does not serve our national interest. It is time not merely to urge but to require a change of course. This legislation does just that, and I urge its passage.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. SCHWARTZ).

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, today President Bush, as required by Congress, has reported on progress made by the Iraqi Government on political and military benchmarks. He reported that the Iraqis have not accomplished any of these goals.

It is time, in fact past time, for the Iraqis to take control of their own future. It is time for the Iraqis to move forward, resolve their internal conflicts and begin the process of national reconciliation.

More than 3,600 Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring freedom

and democracy to Iraq. Our military has performed exceptionally; for that and for their sacrifices, our Nation will be internally grateful.

But without progress by the Iraqis themselves, there is little more that our military can do. And despite the stubbornness of our President to stay the course, it is time for us to bring our troops home.

I am proud to be with the majority in Congress and across America in supporting this responsible plan to redeploy our troops, set a new course in Iraq, and lead our Nation towards greater security here at home and across the world.

I rise in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act and I stand in support of a change in strategy for U.S. involvement in Iraq: one that sets a timetable for prompt and safe withdrawal of our armed forces.

For many of us on the House Floor today this is not the first time we have voted for such a change, or demanded a new plan from the President.

In March, we voted to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq, improve troop readiness, and demand accountability from the administration. The President vetoed our plan.

In May, Congress enacted specific political and military benchmarks for the Iraqi government. By tying the goals to funds for military action in Iraq, we made it clear that progress is a prerequisite for continued assistance by the United States.

Today, President Bush, as required by Congress, reported on progress made by the Iraqi government towards those benchmarks. He reported that the Iraqis have not accomplished any of these goals.

More than 3,600 Americans have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring freedom and democracy to Iraq. Our military has performed exceptionally. They removed a government hostile to the United States and took responsibility for providing enough stability to enable the Iraqi people to establish their own free and independent government. For that and for their sacrifices, our Nation will be eternally grateful.

Yet, as the war enters its fifth year, sectarian violence and failure of political progress has put our troops in a more and more threatening and dangerous situation. This volatility and the President's surge strategy have increased U.S. and Iraqi casualties and injuries.

It is time —well past time—for the Iraqis to take control of their own future. It is time for the Iraqis to move forward to establish an effective system of government, to resolve their internal conflicts, and to begin the process of national reconciliation. Without these actions by the Iraqis themselves, there is little more our military can do. It is time—well past time—for us to bring them home.

On behalf of the American people, we are seeking to do just that. Today we will vote once again to end our military involvement on the frontlines in Iraq and bring our troops home despite the stubbornness of our President to stay the course.

It is my hope that that Republicans will join us in supporting this responsible plan to redeploy our troops and to press the President for a new course in Iraq. As Democrats, we will lead this country towards a more responsible—more strategic path—to end our military involvement in Iraq. In so doing, we remain committed to protect our nation, our people and our strategic interests at home and around the world.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE).

Mr. COLE of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this bill because it is the wrong debate at the wrong place at the wrong time; and most importantly, it sends the wrong message.

It is the wrong debate because it serves no useful purpose. We know this bill will never become law. If it passes, it will be vetoed, and that veto will be sustained. We are wasting the time and trying the patience of the American people for no useful purpose.

It is the wrong place because it is what happens in Iraq, not here, that will determine the outcome of the current struggle. Our forces and those of the Iraqi Government are in a tough fight. We should reinforce them, not undercut them, and we should encourage the Iraqi Government, not abandon it.

It is the wrong time because it is too early to debate the outcome of the current effort in Iraq. I have great respect for the author of this bill, but it is General Petraeus's report and assessment that should guide our deliberations in this body. He has asked us to wait until September before he offers us an assessment of the progress and prospects of the current effort. Having given him a tough job, we owe it to him to adhere to the timeline he has requested.

It is the wrong message, most importantly, because it strengthens rather than weakens our enemies.

□ 1530

They know they cannot defeat our forces, but they can and they do believe they can outlast this Congress. This debate and this bill will only strengthen them in that belief.

By strengthening our enemies, we undercut the best efforts of our forces, the forces of Iraq and the Iraqi Government. The best way to undo the damage that this bill has already done is to defeat it, and I urge my colleagues to do so.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, might I inquire how much time is left on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has 49½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 29 minutes remaining.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 1 minute at this point to one of our very focused new Members, the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. CHRIS MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

For all that we disagree on here today, we agree on one thing: We all want a stable, independent Iraq. What I can't understand is how anyone can still believe that our continued, open-ended military intervention there will lead to a stable nation. In fact, it's doing the opposite.

The Iraqi Parliament and ministries are in unprecedented disarray. The President's own report to Congress will say that we haven't met any of our political benchmarks there, and an estimated 13,000 Iraqis are dead since the escalation began.

The fact is, as someone much wiser than I said, the Iraqis today are paying wholesale rather than retail for their political decisions. So long as we are the military bodyguard for every major Iraqi political group, so long as we are subsidizing the political decisions of Iraqi political leaders, they will never make the difficult political concessions necessary to create a stable society there.

I support this bill, Mr. Speaker, because not another American soldier should die for a strategy that is unfathomably making Iraq less safe and less stable.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman who started the Iraq Study Group, the gentleman from Virginia, the very distinguished Mr. WOLF.

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise against the resolution, and I rise in support of the Iraq Study Group.

Most Americans favor the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. In fact, most Members of this body also favor the Iraq Study Group, but all would favor its consideration. I have asked the Rules Committee on three different occasions to make the Iraq Study Group recommendations in order, and I have been denied.

Let me say that we ought not blindly follow the White House, nor we ought not blindly follow the Democratic leadership in Congress. The American people have a very low opinion of this institution, as Mr. THORNBERRY just said, because all they see us doing is attacking, dividing, and using political rhetoric.

The American people want us to come together. A majority of your side have said they support the Iraq Study Group. A majority of my side have said they support the Iraq Study Group. Lee Hamilton, Jim Baker, Leon Panetta, and Ed Meese have done an outstanding job. They have 41 experts of all political views that have come together.

This body ought to be voting and debating the Iraq Study Group and not a resolution that is preordained that it will be vetoed.

Let's come together. Let's bring it up for a vote, but to blindly follow the White House or to blindly follow the Democratic leadership that will not give this up, we will continue to have the lowest opinion poll this Congress has ever had. The American people deserve better. The men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan deserve better, and their families deserve better.

The 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group provide a comprehensive blueprint for dealing with the war in Iraq. Its conclusions were the result of consensus, and most people favor implementing the bipartisan panel's recommendations.

Members of the administration, albeit anonymously, have been quoted as saying the ISG is the way to go. Members of the military have looked favorably on the report. And so have both sides of the aisle here in Congress.

H.R. 2574, which would codify the recommendations of the report, and whose lead sponsor is a Democrat, has 58 cosponsors. 34 Republicans are on the bill; and there are 24 Democrats.

Look who served on the panel: Jim Baker, Lee Hamilton, Lawrence Eagleburger, Vernon Jordan, Ed Meese, Leon Panetta, Sandra Day O'Connor, Chuck Robb, Alan Simpson and Bill Perry. Secretary Gates served until being appointed Secretary of Defense.

The panel took nearly 9 months to come up with its 79 recommendations—which were all agreed to unanimously.

The ISG met with military officers, regional experts, academics, journalists and high-level government officials from America and abroad.

Congress should have opportunity to debate—and discuss—the merits of the Iraq Study group's recommendations.

It is not adequate to just blindly follow the whims of the White House or the Democrat Leadership in Congres. We need to be working together toward building a consensus on this issue rather trying to score political points.

The American people expect more. The men and women serving in uniform deserve more. So do their families.

They want to see us the Congress, the administration and the nation working together; not fighting each other.

Implementing the 79 recommendations of the Iraq Study Group is the one thing we can do that could have an impact.

I have tried three times now to get this Congress to adopt the recommendations of the ISG. Each time my efforts have been rebuffed by the Rules Committee. If we had acted back in January, we wouldn't be here today. I realize the war has created a bitter divide in our country. The ISG allows us to come together.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

(Mr. INSLEE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, the best way to stop a disastrous war would have been not to have started it, but the American people know that, it having been started, we did have a moral obligation to the Iraqi people to give them a reasonable chance to form a government. But after 4 years, after 3,600 lives, after $450 billion of American money sunk into the sands of Iraq, that moral obligation has been fulfilled in spades.

Now we have a moral obligation to our sons, a moral obligation to our daughters, a moral obligation to our husbands and wives. The moral obligation to Iraq has been completed. The moral obligation to our families now needs to be honored, and it could only be honored by passage of this resolution.

Now, people have said that we can't just leave; we need a way forward. There is only one way forward to security, to reduce the threats from the Mideast, and that is to break our addiction to oil from that region of the world.

Take one-half of the $80 billion and put it in energy efficiency, we'll give you security. Pass this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to the chairwoman of the Small Business Committee, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ).

(Ms. VELÁZQUEZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956. We must support and protect our troops, and the best way to do that is to bring them home.

The American people want the troops out of harm's way. The White House has not met its own benchmarks, and with this resolution, the Iraqi leaders, for once, will know that we mean business.

Mr. Speaker, the pain and suffering felt because of this war is unconscionable. New York has lost over a 150 brave young souls; yet, for this President, there's no ending to this war.

There is a smarter way. Under H.R. 2956, our troops start to come home in 120 days. Over 70 percent of Americans want us out of Iraq. Democracy is about elected officials listening to the people. Democracy is what we are trying to teach Iraqis, how to run their own democracy. By voting to bring our troops home, we can show them.

The American people want this war to be over. Put your faith and trust in them. Choose democracy. Choose a way forward. Vote for this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to a leader on our foreign policy issues, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF).

(Mr. SCHIFF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, when the President announced in January that he intended to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq, he sought to betray the increase in American combat forces as a necessary precondition for Iraq's government to make the political compromises necessary to prevent Iraq's civil war from spiraling completely out of control. In that speech, the President pledged to hold the Iraqi leadership accountable and to demand progress in two main areas: political reconciliation and security.

Now, more than 6 months later, it's unfortunate but also undeniable that little sustainable progress has been made on either front. Even as we speak, the administration is downplaying the significance of an interim report on the effect of the surge in Iraq.

On the security front, the heroism and sacrifices of American forces has caused a drop in sectarian killings, leading to an overall drop in the number of Iraqi deaths, but the reduction of Iraqi casualties has come with a horrific increase in the loss of our own troops. More than 600 Americans have been killed since January.

Moreover, as American troops leave cities that are quieted with their own blood, there is every indication that Iraqi troops will not be able to sustain the calm. If the past is any indicator, insurgents and militias are merely waiting for us to exhaust ourselves and move on before returning, and Iraqi security forces will be powerless to stop them.

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On reconciliation, the Iraqi Government has failed to meet any of the political benchmarks endorsed by the President in January and which this Congress mandated earlier this spring. These political goals are the best indicator of the prospects for reconciliation in Iraq and, tragically, all signs indicate that political reconciliation has been non-existent.

The Iraqi Parliament has yet to begin consideration of the oil law or an associated revenue-sharing law. Given the disparate geographical distribution of Iraq's oil reserves, these laws are essential if Iraq is to have any hope of remaining a united country.

More alarming, is the lack of progress in healing the Sunni-Shiite rift. Of greatest importance, is the need to reverse some of the more draconian edicts of the postwar de-Baathification orders promulgated by former Coalition Provisional Authority chief Paul Bremer. These decrees removed any incentive for Sunnis to participate in creating a better future for Iraq. Other laws—to disarm militias and to grant amnesty—are still being formulated, and most observers believe that the prospect of disarming militias is so remote that it will not be possible in the foreseeable future.

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on before returning—and Iraqi security forces will be powerless to stop them.

There has been one very positive development—in al Anbar province, Sunni tribal leaders have decided that al Qaeda's indiscriminate killing makes them a bigger problem than we are, and they have taken up arms against our common foe. This alliance of American forces and former insurgents is desirable and should be encouraged elsewhere. But, like most marriages of convenience, it is not sustainable and cannot form the bedrock of a secure Iraq or reconciliation among Iraqi sects.

For almost two years, I have been calling for a change in our mission in Iraq—from policing a civil war to training, containment and counter-terrorism. This necessitates a responsible redeployment of our combat forces from Iraq, and I believe that this bill does an excellent job of providing a framework for that redeployment, while still giving our armed forces the flexibility that they need to respond to contingencies.

Iraq's future must be decided by the Iraqi people and that solution must come from political reconciliation. Every day that we maintain our forces in the crossfire between warring sects is another opportunity for hatreds to harden and radicals to consolidate their grip on Iraq's ethnic and sectarian communities. We should change our mission now, and begin the withdrawal of our combat forces.

In planning for the inevitable withdrawal, we must recognize that a poorly executed departure could result in an escalation of civil war violence as Iraqi sects compete for power. As we draw down our forces, we must make every effort to prevent a magnification of this catastrophic violence. In particular, we must not compound the error of the lack of pre-invasion planning, with an equally tragic failure to adequately anticipate the post-occupation environment.

Mr. Speaker, it is long past time to begin to end the war in Iraq. I support this bill and urge its passage by the House today.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to a former member of our Armed Services Committee, my friend and colleague from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, over the recess I had the opportunity to have several public hearings back home, and Iraq was one on everyone's mind. The overwhelming consensus was that we need a new strategy in Iraq, a view shared by national security experts and illustrated by continued violence in the region. Today, we can chart a new path so that we can finally bring our troops home.

Americans know the Bush strategy isn't working, and today's Iraq status report confirms the lack of progress. The Iraqi Government has failed to promote political reconciliation, and our military is paying the price. Our troops have done a superb job, but they were not sent to Iraq to referee a civil war.

Today's bill requires our military to start redeploying out of Iraq within 120 days, to be completed by April 1, 2008. We will not abandon Iraq, but we must implement a new strategy based on political, economic and diplomatic initiatives.

I want to thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership on this measure, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to a member of the Appropriations Committee, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from New Jersey.

I rise in support of this bill. I can't believe the argument in opposition to this bill, that we should continue to stay the course, because this is the policy that has led us in the wrong direction for four straight years. This has been the worst foreign policy fiasco in American history.

Now we're being told that we're there to fight al Qaeda. There were no al Qaeda in Iraq when we went into Iraq. Saddam had nothing to do with 9/11. Now there are about 5,000 there out of a population of 26 million.

We have trained hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. Many of them we've given them more training than we've given our own troops.

This policy is not worthy of the sacrifice of our troops and their military families. It's leading us down a dead-end street. It's time that it was changed.

Mr. Speaker, we are told that we need to train the Iraqis more. All we are doing is equipping and training them in order to kill each other in a civil war that I'm afraid is going to be inevitable.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FRANKS), a distinguished member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, just today, while debating this new Iraq withdrawal bill, reports continue to surface that al Qaeda is now restructuring its power.

Like several other recent actions on the part of Democrats recently, this bill communicates to jihadist enemies that we are weakening and confirms their belief that they have a critical advantage over free people in the world because their will is far stronger than ours and they need only to persevere to break our resolve.

Osama bin Laden himself has stated, ''The whole world is watching this war and the two adversaries. It's either victory and glory, or misery and humiliation.''

Mr. Speaker, if Democrats continue to insist that the war in Iraq has nothing to do with the war on terrorism, then I wish they would explain that to the terrorists because they still don't understand, and they are continuing to be fundamentally committed to the destruction of the Western world and to killing us wherever they find us.

Mr. Speaker, the premise behind this bill is that we can have peace tomorrow so long as we are willing to surrender today. Unfortunately, with jihadist terrorism, just the opposite is true. If we surrender to terrorism today, it will only bring greater horror and suffering to all of humanity tomorrow.

So vital questions arise to those who would continue to demand that we surrender Iraq to terrorists. Are they also willing to allow the citizens and families of this Nation to face jihad and what may become a nuclear jihad here at home? And what will we tell our children when that day comes?

Mr. Speaker, defeating radical jihad in Iraq and throughout the world will require the support, perseverance, patience, wisdom and prayers of the American people. But for the sake of those people and for our children, for our future generation and for people across the world who still hope for freedom, I pray that the Members of this body would heed that warning echoing down through history.

There is no substitute for victory.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy.

It's not too early. It's too late, too late because the President's party has enabled these disastrous policies. And listening to some on the other side of the aisle, there are people still disconnected from reality.

But each day their congressional support is slowly crumbling as evidence mounts of the costs of failure. It's not just 10 billions of dollars a month. It's more lives lost and thousands of hopes and dreams shattered.

□ 1545

Even those of us who opposed this from the beginning understand that 300,000 American soldiers and contractors cannot leave overnight. But that's no excuse not to start now, as rapidly and as responsibly as possible, to get our people out of crossfire of what is now a religious civil war. Our soldiers have done all that they can do and can be expected of them.

I call on the doubters to join us in supporting the strongest most direct measure possible, not just to send the President a message, but rein him in and bring our soldiers home from this nightmare.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, the gentlelady from Oregon (Ms. HOOLEY).

Ms. HOOLEY. I thank my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, today is not cause for celebration, nor is it a time for high rhetoric. Instead, today is a moment of conscience. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent, 3,600 of our best and brightest have been called upon to sacrifice in the unforgiving sands of Iraq.

When in a hole, it is best to stop digging. We must make plans to protect those we can best protect, to institute a rational response capability

within the region. But first we must make immediate plans to disengage ourselves from Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to find consensus on this issue. We owe it to the brave men and women that have sacrificed and will continue to sacrifice until we find and implement resolution.

Once we have disengaged ourselves from the Iraqi civil war, maybe, with patience, dialogue and an open ear, we may find new relationships within the Middle East to help our partners secure the peace we have thus far found so elusive.

Let us renew our commitment to finding a solution for Middle East conflict. It is time we used our heads and hearts rather than fists and force.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting once again for changing course in Iraq.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to our thoughtful friend and colleague from the State of Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, let me just very briefly outline exactly what we are after in this bill.

First of all, this is a responsible effort for redeployment so that we can refocus and fight the war on terror. The situation in Iraq is a civil war compounded by civil wars that have been going on ever since Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, Isaac, Ishmael, Esau, Mohammed and his son-in-law, which has broken into the Shi'as and the Sunnis; hundreds of thousands of years, folks.

None of the people from Iraq came to this country and asked, please come over and pump in $500 billion, 3,600 of the lives of your precious sons and daughters to make a democracy for us. That was a decision that was made counter to the authorization in the first place. It was a go against weapons of mass destruction.

It is responsible. It is focused. We need to do it, and I urge passage of this bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER).

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I spent the Fourth of July recess traveling to Pakistan and to Iraq.

I came away with a couple of observations. First in Pakistan, our allies in the war on terror, the Pakistanis, have great concern about an early withdrawal from Iraq, because they saw first hand, after the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, when America left that region, left Afghanistan to uncertainty and chaos, what happened was the rise of the Taliban, an extremist group, that then gave basis to al Qaeda to be able to plan and plot the 9/11 attacks on America.

So the Pakistanis are extremely concerned about an early withdrawal. Our allies around the world are concerned. The word of America is at risk. Our allies are watching what we do here in the United States Congress and what America does.

Second, traveling to Iraq, I came away with some positive reports, not only from our commanders, but listening to the Iraqi general, who is in charge of the national police. He said that the Shia, the Sunni and the Kurds have come together as Iraqis, standing up a national police force that's fighting to throw out the negative elements that are in Iraq today. They are standing shoulder-to-shoulder, the Shia, Sunni and Kurds. Our folks also told us that they need more time to train the police, the security of the Iraqis.

Talking to our soldiers was the most powerful information I came away with. One of the sergeants in our Special Forces told us something very significant. Right about now, he is saddling up, he is getting ready to go out on a dangerous mission in Iraq tonight to either kill al Qaeda to take down a production facility for IEDs. He said to me, he said to the group of us that was there, we cannot leave Iraq prematurely because chaos will ensue, and what we will find is that the terrorists will be in the streets of America.

So listening to that powerful statement from somebody who is putting his life on the line, every single night, that's powerful information. Those are powerful words.

We have to allow this surge, not just to last for 3 weeks, but to go for 3 months. Let it go. Let us vote down this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished chairman of the Education and Labor Committee, my friend from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER).

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Chairman SKELTON's bill to bring American forces home from Iraq and to begin to end this tragic war, a war borne of lies, ignorance and arrogance. The cost of this war has been high to our country, to our economy but, most importantly, to our men and women in uniform, for they have taken all of the sacrifice for our President's decision to take this country to war in Iraq.

Our military responded honorably to the President's decision, but he failed to honor their sense of duty and their courage with a plan that was designed to succeed. His failed policy has cost their families, their communities, and most tragically, it has cost them their limbs and their lives.

The war in Iraq cannot be won, and it cannot be lost. It can only be brought to an end. The President continues to display both sheer arrogance and tragic ignorance as he refuses to change policy. Over and over again, it says the same thing, to stay the same course, to give them more time and that success is just around the corner.

The American people realize that staying the course in Iraq was not a plan, and it is not going to work. I have known, as many of my Democratic colleagues have, that staying the course is not acceptable. We honor our troops when we have the courage to bring them home and end this war.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at this time to yield 1 minute to my friend and colleague, a Member of the Ways and Means committee from the State of Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues suggested earlier that debating the war as we are today is breaking the will of the American people.

On the contrary, it's the people's will that is breaking down the wall of a tragically mistaken policy. It has become painfully obvious that the White House is incapable of changing course in Iraq.

The Bush administration's talking points about the situation change from week to week, but the fundamental strategy remains the same. The President has determined our troops will remain in Iraq no matter what. The reality is that the government of Iraq is not meeting the benchmark.

Six months into the surge, there is no indication that the Iraqis are coming together to make the political decisions necessary to end the sectarian violence that's tearing the country apart. They are unlikely to do so as long as the U.S. military commitment remains open-ended.

We need to change course. Support this bill.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time is left on our side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has 38½ minutes remaining.

The gentleman from California has 23 minutes remaining.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to one of our thoughtful new Members from Florida (Mr. MAHONEY).

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I am rising today in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. The time has come to stop this senseless policy of using our brave men and women in uniform as cops policing a religious civil war, and it's time for our country to rededicate ourselves to winning the war on terror.

The data is in. The facts are irrefutable in and the conclusion clearly demonstrates that the President's continued resolve to engage in nation building in Iraq has made America weaker and has put our Nation in greater peril from terrorist attack. It is time that we stop asking our brave sons and daughters to give the ultimate sacrifice in support of the President's failed policies.

It is time for the President to listen to his own advisors and the American people. It is time for the President to admit mistakes he has made and for him to show leadership by changing direction. It is time for the President to

honor our service men and women by rebuilding our military and by using our finest fighting force the world has ever known to bring Osama bin Laden to justice, to search out and destroy terrorists and to punish the nations that support terror.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished Member of the Ways and Means committee, our friend from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, our men and women in the military have done everything that has been asked of them, and it's time for a new direction.

The reason we're here is because the Republican party never asked a question of the administration for all those years, not one question. They forfeited their oversight responsibilities.

Remember the briefings in the well of this House; we know where the weapons of mass destruction are; according to the Secretary of Defense, they are in south Baghdad; we were going to be welcomed as liberators; the insurgency, as the Vice President stated it, is in its last throws; and finally, mission accomplished? Now we hear: But just give us more time. Stay the course.

If we had asked some questions here along the way, and not been subservient to the White House, we wouldn't find ourselves where we are today, funeral upon funeral, 26,000 Americans wounded. Yet we are told by the White House, just give us more time for this policy to take root.

How much more time? Vote for this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to Mr. PEARCE, the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we are told today that it's time to refocus on the war on terror. Yet as I read this bill, and I would encourage each one of you to go online and read H.R. 2956, I see no refocus on the war on terror.

I see nothing in H.R. 2956 which describes the threat from radical jihad. I see no plan.

We are told that we need to communicate with the White House, that we need to send a bold message to the President. I am sorry, he's right down the street. It's the people who are causing terror, worldwide terror, that the communication needs to be sent to.

Now, I can't tell you exactly what our troops are feeling as we debate these measures.

I can tell you that I was in Vietnam flying missions in Vietnam at the time that Jane Fonda gave aid and comfort to our enemy, and a time that this Congress was withdrawing support from that war. And I can tell you what soldiers at that time felt. They felt dismay. They felt betrayal. They felt like we had been led down a path.

If this were really an attempt by our majority party to deal with the situation that they are concerned about, it should have an immediate withdrawal date. But it lacks that because it's a political tool rather than an attempt to refocus on the war on terror.

I can tell you that it does not ask key questions, key questions like, how will unilateral withdrawal prevent al Qaeda, Hezbollah and other terrorist operatives already in Iraq from establishing robust training facilities from which to plan and execute additional strikes against the United States?

It fails to answer the question that both Israel and Jordan have asked when they said that unilateral withdrawal, much like the Democrats' plan, would have a devastating consequence on their countries and the region as a whole.

What impact will our unilateral withdrawal from Iraq have on the safety of regional allies, such as Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait? Those questions go unasked and unaddressed in H.R. 2956, because this is not a plan to refocus the war on terror. This is a plan to withdraw and hope that we can retreat home without anyone following us.

It just won't happen that way. The terrorists will come with us as we retreat.

I urge defeat of H.R. 2956.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to our friend and colleague, the hard-working new Member from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

□ 1600

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, back in February when this Congress started the 110th, there was a proposal up here, a resolution that passed with mostly Democrat support, very few Republicans, to say we supported the troops but we opposed the surge or the escalation. Since that time, we have put 20,000 or 30,000 more troops into Iraq, and since that time we have had some of the deadliest months that we have incurred in this failed war in the Middle East.

As time has gone on, we have seen Senators VOINOVICH; LAMAR ALEXANDER from my home State; LUGAR; and others on the Republican side in the Senate come forth and say we need a change of direction. The handwriting has been on the wall in both cloakrooms. The handwriter got to the Democratic cloakroom a lot sooner than apparently the handwriter got to the Republican cloakroom. Either that, or the optometrist hasn't made it over to the other side. But the handwriting is on the wall, and in the interim there are American men and women dying needlessly. Over 3,600 have died; many, many, many, many more casualties, and the cost to this country will be great.

While I was home during the home workweek, I saw a lady who told me her son has been at Desert Storm. He was still in the military. He had been in Iraq once before. And she told me he told her, Mother, I am proud to fight for my country. I have done it twice. But there is no purpose over there, there is no reason to be over there. We need to come home. I have heard it over and over and over again from the mothers of the soldiers who come home with testimony to our failed foreign policy.

How many, how many, how many more must die? How many more limbs must be lost before the handwriting on the wall in the Republican cloakroom is read? I ask you to look in your own hearts. Think of the soldiers as your children, they are your constituents, and help redeploy them. We are not saying in this proposal that we come home entirely. We keep troops for certain causes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to others in the second person.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from California, Mr. MIKE THOMPSON, 1 minute.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker and Members, our strategy in Iraq isn't working. It wasn't working 3 years ago, and it won't be working another year from now. This isn't about defeat; it is about reality.

Our troops have done a fantastic job. But to risk more lives, more wounded, and to spend more than the half trillion dollars we have already spent far exceeds any gain we can expect.

The best thing to do is to get our troops out, and get them out immediately, and to make the Iraqis take control of their country. But, today, I will vote for this bill which is a realistic shift in strategy that every Member should be able to support.

Our focus should be on protecting our home front, stabilizing Afghanistan, and stamping out terrorism across the globe. And we need to start looking ahead by developing a containment plan to keep Iraq's civil war from spilling over into other countries throughout the region. Mr. Speaker, that is the only way to achieve victory.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlelady from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE).

Mrs. DRAKE. A March 2007 Los Angeles Times editorial posed the question: ''Do we really need a General Pelosi? Too many lives are at stake to allow Members of Congress to play the role of Eisenhower or Lincoln.''

How unfortunate that less than a month after the fifth and final brigade of this surge effort has arrived in Iraq we sit here once again prepared to put bad politics in front of sound policy and undercut that mission, putting the lives of our troops, our coalition partners, and millions of Iraqis at risk.

Once again, the leadership of this institution wants to play general, so it chooses to circumvent the committee process to rush a hastily written piece of legislation to the House floor, one that has no chance of becoming law.

And so the question that I and many Americans have is: Why?

You can find the answer in today's Washington Times. According to this body's majority leader, we are here because ''if we don't do anything, these groups,'' meaning MoveOn and affiliates, ''will feel like we haven't done anything.''

So that's it. We are here to appease MoveOn.org. Where is the policy? Where is the plan? Are we to believe that this bill will bring an end to violence in Iraq? Are we to believe that our withdrawal will make our Nation or the world any safer? Thus, politics replaces policy. We are a Nation at war against Islamic terrorists who have no intention of giving up the fight. We must defend this Nation. We cannot afford to play politics. This legislation carries no plan for securing Iraq or the Middle East, only politics.

Mr. Speaker, we have authorized our military to execute this surge and to report to us in September on its status. Why should we cut the rug out from under them now? Our troops will not give up on us; let's not give up on them. I urge rejection of this resolution.

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to one of the leaders of our 30-something younger members, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK), 3 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend from the Garden State.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I will point to this L.A. Times editorial since now the L.A. Times is an authority on this issue. The newspaper said it reluctantly endorsed the U.S. troop surge when it began. But at the bottom it says: ''We feel that the time has come now for us to leave Iraq.'' That is the L.A. Times.

I also want to point out another thing as we talk about this redeployment, a responsible redeployment, the act that is up before the House right now that we are considering. I just want to make sure the Members of the House know exactly what they are doing, because when they get back home in their districts and they start talking to the heroes and sheroes that have been deployed two to three times and talk to Americans about why they can't meet the needs that they have to meet here domestically, I want them to reflect on this:

I want them to look at the fact that you have $120 billion a year that we are spending in Iraq; per month, $10 billion; per week, $2.3 billion; per day, $329 million; per hour, $13 million since we have been here on the floor, Mr. Speaker; per minute, which I only have two, $228,000. And you have to look at per second, as I take a breath, $3,816.

Also, I want to point out to the Members here, Mr. Speaker, the last time we passed a measure on behalf of the men and women in harm's way and to send the message to the Iraqi Government, they can go on vacation and they don't meet and they don't do the things that we have put forth as benchmarks that they have to meet in a bipartisan way, then why should we reward bad behavior?

And I have this picture here, Mr. Speaker, of when the President called a lot of the Members of the minority here in this House down to the White House and they had a meeting and the President came out, mikes and everything, not one Democrat here, saying that we stand with the President, this is what the minority president said: ''We stand with the President in not overriding his veto.''

I want to know, Mr. Speaker, how many times the Members of the minority party are going to go down to the White House and stand on the schoolhouse door of allowing us to move in a new direction. The American people are way ahead of us on this issue.

I am so happy that Chairman SKELTON has brought this to the House floor. I am hoping that we have a bipartisan vote on it. I am encouraging every Member of the House, and I do mean every Member of the House, even my good friends on the other side of the aisle, to vote for a commonsense new direction. And I think that is very, very important as we look at this responsible redeployment act.

Once again, it takes courage to be a Member of the House. It takes also leadership to be a Member of the House. And some of us have to go see the wizard and pick up both of those values that we all hold and that we should hold. So I encourage you to cast an affirmative vote on the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield to Dr. GINGREY, the gentleman from Georgia, 3 minutes.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the ranking member for yielding. He would make a great Commander in Chief.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to salute my close friend and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Chairman IKE SKELTON. I hold him in the highest regard and I admire him dearly, though I must oppose his bill and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. This bill does not seek to clarify our objectives or a path to victory. It does not offer an alternative to the current plan being implemented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker.

Nowhere to be found are any new ideas or solutions or any talk of curbing violence or compelling political reconciliation. Why? Because there is no pressure on the Democrats to put forth any meaningful ideas. They know that this bill is dead on arrival. The President has vowed to veto it, and rightly so. This is a defeatist measure that serves only to placate the Democrats' liberal base.

Mr. Speaker, a few things about this plan immediately jump out to me. According to this legislation, a date certain withdrawal is to commence 120 days after the enactment of this bill. So why then does the bill wait another 2 months before asking the President to formulate a strategy? It is like asking a quarterback to throw Brother Ben passes until the offensive coordinator can come up with a game plan.

Essentially, this bill says that after our troops have packed their bags and have begun to come home, or maybe to deploy to Okinawa per the Murtha plan, then we will receive this master plan detailing how to provide for the security interests in Iraq.

As a physician, that is akin to calling a patient in for surgery before you have done the exam, yanking somebody's heart out before you have inspected the coronaries. In short, Mr. Speaker, it is a recipe for disaster.

Mr. Speaker, the last troop surge deployed just 3 weeks ago, hardly a significant time period for us to be here today judging the plan. However, I do believe Congress should engage in an ongoing, rational dialogue outlining the expectations of both our troops and the Iraqi Government and the security forces. Nobody is here suggesting that we shouldn't. And we will do it in September when we get the Petraeus report based on that report. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot capitulate to extremist views and sinister plans, which is what this bill would do by sending a message to the terrorists that capitulation begins in 120 days.

I urge my colleagues, oppose this bill.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina, who is the chairman of the Budget Committee and also a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, a friend, my colleague, Mr. SPRATT.

Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution.

I will be frank to say that I think the time lines are too tight, the details are too sketchy; but I recognize this resolution for what it is. It is not a general order or master plan for the redeployment of our troops in Iraq. This is simply a way to frame the debate with the President over how we can most effectively reduce and redeploy the 170,000 troops now on duty in Iraq. We are, after all, in the 5th year of this war.

So far, 3,611 Americans have given their lives, 27,000 have been wounded in action. We have spent $450 billion through May, and continue spending now at a rate of $10 billion a month. Had we the foresight 3 years ago, 4 years ago to see these costs, the War Powers Resolution would not have secured 100 votes in this House.

Opponents of this resolution claim that we are encroaching on the powers of the President as the Commander in Chief. Those who think that should read the resolution and read it carefully.

First of all, it does not call for an immediate withdrawal. It allows 4 months for the reduction in forces to begin. Second, it does not call for withdrawal at all. It calls for a reduction of the

number of troops deployed or transition to a limited mission. Third, it spells out the limited missions. These include force protection, diplomatic protection, pursuit of terrorists, training of Iraqi forces. The resolution, far from interfering, defers to the President, allows the Pentagon to decide just what is the minimum force level for the mission it specifies, provided it justifies its decision.

For the past 3 years, the President has assured us that we would stand down American troops as soon as Iraqi troops stood up. Well, that is essentially what this resolution does; 135 Iraqi battalions have been trained. Many may lack things like logistics to make them freestanding fighting units, but surely this is a capacity we can supply over the next 6 months or even longer through embedded advisers who will remain after April 2008.

This resolution sends the Iraqi troops the message that we are not in their country, Iraq, indefinitely, and that the day is fast approaching when they must take responsibility for the security of their own country.

□ 1615

For the past 2 years the President has told us that benchmarks or milestones have been laid down for the Iraqi government to accomplish. This week we received a progress report on those metrics showing few measurable gains.

So here's our dilemma: Our presence in Iraq, with 170,000 troops, allows the Iraqi government an ability to operate, the freedom of action it would not otherwise enjoy absent our support. But the Iraqi government has exploited that security to avoid doing the very steps that are necessary to its becoming a true government of national reconciliation, which commands the allegiance of all Iraqis.

Yesterday the Deputy Director for Analysis in the Office of National Intelligence told us, ''current political trends are moving the country in a negative direction.'' One way to make Iraqi leaders take the reins of their own government, establish their government, is to announce reduction of our forces in front-line combat troops and their transition to a limited mission and make it clear that our commitment to their country is not open-ended.

Three or 4 months ago, we were told by the administration it was going to undertake a new strategy, a new plan for securing Iraq called a surge, concentrated primarily in Baghdad. We now have the early results from that. We were told we would know in 3 or 4 months. Three or 4 months have passed, and we've only seen casualties increase. There have been some successes, sure, and we're thankful for them. And I hope it succeeds. But we need a new strategy. We do not have one, and this calls for a rethinking of everything. And for these reasons I will vote for this resolution, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to my colleague, my friend, the gentleman from Illinois who is the chairman of the Democratic Caucus, Mr. EMANUEL.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, this morning the President noted with a report that we were at the starting line; 3,600 American lives, $485 billion spent, $10 billion a month, 5 years into the war. If that is the starting line, then I ask you, what is the cost to get to the finish line? If the President describes today that we are at the starting line, I ask you, what is the cost to get to the finish line after all those lives?

That would not be the words I would choose to tell the American families who've lost their loved ones. That would not be the words I would choose to tell the people who've put up close to a half a trillion dollars that we are at the starting line after 5 years, and our reputation sullied around the world.

Our American men and women in uniform have done brilliantly. Everything we have asked them to do, they have done. They have defeated an army. They have seized a nation, deposed a dictator, taken a castle. There is not one thing we've asked our men and women in uniform and their leadership to do. The only thing they've asked is that their civilian leadership do what they have done, and they were let down. They have won the war, and this administration has failed in the occupation.

Now, President Kennedy once said, ''to govern is to choose; choices are between bad and worse.'' And my colleagues on the other side are not all wrong. They fear that if we leave precipitously, there could be real violence, worse than we're seeing; not totally wrong.

Those of us have said, after 4 or 5 years of more money, more troops, more time and more of the same, at a certain point, you have to understand that there are costs to that because today we see in the report that, in fact, al Qaeda is reconfiguring and stronger than ever. There are costs to staying, and there are costs to leaving.

So what are the choices we all have to make? They are choices between bad and worse. There are those who want to stay and fight the war in Iraq, and there are those of us who want to fight al Qaeda. This is a road to fighting al Qaeda.

There are those who want to police a civil war between Sunnis and Shia, and those of us who believe in fighting the war on terror. That is the choice. Neither is easy. There are consequences to both, but all of us recognize that.

But after 5 years, 3,600 American lives, $485 billion, you have to ask yourself, are we getting stronger, or are we diminishing our reputation and our power?

As our military's stretched, as we see al Qaeda reconfiguring and stronger than ever before, that is the choice before us. And I do agree; it's not a free choice. But staying blindly, without ever having asked a question, only more money, more time, more troops and more of the same with no other clear policy has consequences to America.

In that sense, as we measure the Iraqi progress, as the President noted today, there are also ways to measure our progress.

We were told the insurgency was in its last throes. Not happening. We were told, at another point, they were placing democracy is the Mideast. Not happening. We were told that we were going to find WMD, weapons of mass destruction. Not happening. At every point that this administration has put a benchmark down for itself, it is not happening.

There are consequences to moving just down this path that has been traveled. Too costly. It is time for a new direction for America and Iraq.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield to Mr. MCKEON, the gentleman from California, for a unanimous consent request.

(Mr. MCKEON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the motion being considered. Yet again, I find myself standing in defense of our military leaders and our honorable men and women in uniform. Today's ill-conceived resolution is another example of partisan maneuvering by the Democrats. I think it is important to remind my colleagues exactly what is being sought by this resolution and the negative effect it will have. While our troops are fighting in Iraq, Democratic leadership is attempting to draw attention from any signs of progress and ignore the sound strategy that we laid out earlier this year. What happened to the promise of a New Way Forward in Iraq?

General Petraeus has honorably taken on this leadership role in this war with the support of Democrats in the other body, and yet, here today the Democrats seek to publicly undermine him. It is shameful. He was given a job to do—to execute the Baghdad Security Plan—and he is doing it alongside our troops. The plan is still underway and today's interim report indicates a reduction in violent attacks in Baghdad. We should be standing with him, with our plan, and allowing for its full implementation. Instead, however, we see today the real Democratic agenda in this resolution: the truth is the Democrats aren't interested in whether or not the security plan will work.

Mr. Speaker, I question whether this resolution would do more harm than good. A precipitous withdrawal of troops would seriously endanger our soldiers and would signal defeat to our enemies around the world.

Mr. Speaker this House speaks loudest when it speaks with purpose, and voting to remove troops before receiving the report in September, that we asked for, is contradictory and bad policy. This bill does not honor the sacrifice and dedication of our troops who have fought to implement the plan we approved.

We should never miss the opportunity in this House to act in the best interest of our foreign

policy and our men and women in harm's way. We should—at every opportunity—reject undermining the faith and dedicated work of our brave men and women in uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in opposing this dangerous resolution. It is the duty of this House and of this Congress and of this Nation to give our men and women the support they need to see this conflict through. We have allocated a timeframe for our new General, and now we must allow our military leaders the opportunity to prevail.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words. There's a movie out called ''Groundhog Day'' in which the same thing happens over and over for a particularly long period of time.

We've had this debate once recently. We're having it again today, and I understand the leadership on the other side intends to have these conversations once a week for the next 4 weeks. I don't anticipate that much different information will be said.

I have the profoundest respect for the chairman of the committee and the man whose name is on this resolution, but I'm going to have to oppose it.

Much of what gets said here today, Mr. Speaker, is doublespeak. It's doublespeak to talk about the failure to get benchmark progress on the civilian scene, on the political scene in Iraq, and yet to strip $2 billion out of the State Department's funding request, part of the CR, to strip another $500 million out of the 2008 appropriations request, money that would go to do the nation-building part, the provincial reconstruction team part in Iraq, and then to call it a failure. That's doublespeak in a classic sense.

It's doublespeak, Mr. Speaker, to talk about how wonderful our troops are, and they are. They are magnificent, and even more magnificent are the families who support them and let them do what they do. And then to turn around and say that the implementation of this policy has failed, but somehow they've not failed as a result of that; I think that's doublespeak as well.

It's also doublespeak to say the current policy says we're going to have a report in 60 days from David Petraeus, the right man at the right spot to give us that report, and then vote on a resolution that says 120 days we're going to start getting out, when we'll have the better information in September, in 60 days. That's doublespeak. It's disingenuous, I believe, to do it that way.

The majority has the ability to get out of Iraq today. And all of the talk about failure, all of the talk about the lost lives, all of the talk about the costs, by extending this another 120 days, as they intend to do, leaves additional lives at risk. And somehow to me, that just seems to be at counter purposes of what the conversation is.

I encourage my colleagues to vote this resolution down.

Mr. SKELTON. May I inquire, Mr. Speaker, of the time remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). The gentleman from Missouri has 23 minutes remaining. The gentleman from California has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend from California (Mr. BACA).

(Mr. BACA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a veteran who served in the 101st and 82nd Airborne Division in support of H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act.

This war is a failure, and it's time to bring back our troops. We can no longer stay the course.

Mr. Speaker, the President's policy has been a complete failure. We have lost too many lives. There are too many wounded who will never have normal lives.

We're proud of our troops and the service they have provided to our country. But our troops are now trapped in the middle of a civil war that we cannot end.

This is something that the Iraqi people must do for themselves. Our military presence in Iraq is not making our country safer. Instead, the war has taken the lives of 3,610 soldiers.

In my district alone, we have lost 13 brave men and women, and when I see their faces and their families that have to deal with these individuals that have lost their lives, we're proud of them, but they've lost their lives, and the families who continue to suffer.

CA–43'S FALLEN SOLDIERS IN IRAQ

RIALTO

Staff Sgt. Jorge A. Molina Bautista: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 37 years old. Died: May 23, 2004 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 1st Light Armored Reconnaisance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Incident: Killed by hostile fire in Anbar province.

Spec. Luis D. Santos: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 20 years old. Died: June 8, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, Colo. Incident: Died of injuries sustained when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Humvee during combat operations in Buritz.

Spec. Victor A. Garcia: Hometown: Rialto, California, U.S. Age: 22 years old. Died: July 1, 2007 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), Fort Lewis, Wash. Incident: Killed by enemy small arms fire in Baghdad.

Pfc. William A. Farrar Jr.: Hometown: Redlands, California, U.S. Age: 20 years old. Died: May 11, 2007 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 127th Military Police Company, 709th Military Police Battalion, 18th Military Police Brigade, Darmstadt, Germany. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb device detonated near his vehicle in Iskandariyah. Son of Rialto Police Captain Tony Farrar.

BLOOMINGTON

Cpl. Joseph A. Blanco: Hometown: Bloomington, California, U.S. Age: 25 years old. Died: April 11, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Tex. Incident: Died of injuries sustained when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Bradley fighting vehicle and he subsequently came under small arms fire during combat operations in Taji.

FONTANA

Lance Cpl. Fernando S. Tamayo: Hometown: Fontana, California, U.S. Age: 19 years old. Died: December 21, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Twentynine Palms, Calif. Incident: Died while conducting combat operations in Anbar Province.

Sgt. Bryan A. Brewster: Hometown: Fontana, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: May 5, 2006 in Operation Enduring Freedom. Unit: Army, 3rd Battalion, 10th Aviation Regiment, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), Fort Drum N.Y. Incident: Killed when his CH–47 Chinook helicopter crashed during combat operations east of Abad, Afghanistan.

SAN BERNARDINO

Cpl. Nicanor Alvarez: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 22 years old. Died: August 21, 2004 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Marines, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Incident: Killed by enemy action in Anbar province.

Pfc. Alex Oceguera: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 19 years old. Died: October 31, 2006 in Operation Enduring Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, Fort Drum, N.Y. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb detonated near his vehicle in Wygal Valley, Afghanistan.

Cpl. Sean R. Grilley: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: October 16, 2003 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 716th Military Police Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky. Incident: Killed while negotiating with Iraqis congregating near a mosque after curfew in Karbala when the Iraqis opened fire.

Spec. Timothy D. Watkins: Hometown: San Bernardino, California, U.S. Age: 24 years old. Died: October 15, 2005 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Benning, Ga. Incident: Killed when a makeshift bomb exploded near his Bradley fighting vehicle during combat operations in Ar Ramadi.

ONTARIO

Spec. Jose R. Perez: Hometown: Ontario, California, U.S. Age: 21 years old. Died: October 18, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army, 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, Baumholder, Germany. Incident: Killed by enemy small arms fire in Ramadi.

Sgt. 1st Class Rudy A. Salcido: Hometown: Ontario, California, U.S. Age: 31 years old. Died: November 9, 2006 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Unit: Army National Guard, 1114th Transportation Company, Army National Guard, Bakersfield, Calif. Incident: Killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near his convoy vehicle in Baghdad.

As a veteran, I say that this war was wrong because you could not convince me why we were there in the first place. The President sent our troops away without proper training or equipment or proof of weapons of mass destruction.

The President believes that Iraq is making our country safer. This is not true. It has put more of us in greater risk. Our military is stretched too thin. We are at risk of not being prepared for any future emergency.

The Iraq war has cost billions of dollars, $650 billion, $10 billion a month. The money could be used to defend homeland security, for police officers, for highway patrol officers, for fire fighters, for sheriffs, for education, for health care and our seniors.

A change in course in Iraq is overdue. We must bring our troops home now. It's time for a new direction. We must support this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. WILSON), whose son has served a tour of duty in Iraq.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Thank you, Congressman HUNTER. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of our troops. And I appreciate that your son, Duncan, Jr., has served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, just today we received President Bush's report to Congress on progress in Iraq. I find it sad for American families that on the same day the House is considering legislation that sets arbitrary deadlines and timelines for retreat, the provisions of H.R. 2956 mandate a hasty troop withdrawal starting within 120 days.

Additionally, the bill states that this withdrawal would be conducted in a safe and orderly way. Logistically, it would be impossible to remove our troops safely from Iraq in this short time line. Such rapid retreat would embolden the enemy, leaving American forces subject to ambushes, rockets and IED attacks.

As a 31-year veteran of the Army National Guard, and as a father of four sons in the military, my oldest an Iraq veteran, I especially understand the threats to our troops. In my seven visits to Iraq and three to Afghanistan, I've been continually inspired by the competence of our military leaders and the dedicated troops.

In today's edition of the Washington Post, the lead editorial makes the case against arbitrary withdrawal. It states, ''The generals who have devised a new strategy believe they are making faithful progress. Before Congress begins managing rotation schedules and ordering withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they ask for to see whether their strategy can offer some new hope.''

Additionally, al Qaeda has stated that Iraq is the central front in the global war on terrorism. And I believe to withdraw our troops before their mission is complete would invite future attacks at home. The Washington Post editorial states, ''Advocates of withdrawal would like to believe that Afghanistan is now a central front in the war on terror, but Iraq is not; believing that doesn't make sense.''

In conclusion, God bless our troops. We will never forget September the 11th.

I urge defeat of H.R. 2956.

□ 1630

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to my friend and colleague, a veteran of the war in Iraq and member of the Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY).

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, for the sixth time, I rise calling for a change of direction in Iraq. For the sixth time, I call on the President to stop sending our brave men and women to referee a religious civil war. For the sixth time I call on this administration to focus our efforts in fighting the central front on the war on terror by killing Osama bin Laden and destroying al Qaeda in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, last week countless folks back in Pennsylvania stopped me and asked, Aren't you frustrated by this President who refuses to listen to Congress and the American people?

I told them, I am frustrated that our President refuses to follow the advice of military experts and the will of the American people. I am frustrated because my fellow paratroopers are still fighting and dying in the 138-degree heat of a Baghdad summer. I told them that I will refuse to stop fighting for the best policy for our troops and our families back here at home.

Mr. Speaker, leaving our troops in the middle of a religious civil war isn't resolute. It's reckless. No question that change is slow, but take heart, America. Change is coming. Congress is not going to stop.

President Bush, the legislative branch of government is back and we are not going to go away. We will change the course in Iraq and fight for a smarter global war on terror.

Some Republicans have questioned the patriotism of my fellow Democrats. Even former soldiers here in the House floor. But those types of Republicans are the exception and not the rule. In my short time in Congress, I have learned that most of my colleagues across the aisle are good, decent, and patriotic Americans. Mr. Speaker, I know how much pressure my friends across the aisle are under from the President, from their party leaders to just stay the course.

But I ask you as a soldier, as a father, and as a colleague to acknowledge what the status quo entails. That means additional warnings, walking to our desks here in the Halls of Congress, holding our breath and hoping we don't get word of another fallen soldier.

Mr. Speaker, I implore my Republican colleagues who know in their heart that we need a change. I implore you to think about how many more of these calls you have to make, how many more calls to wives, to fathers, to mothers we all will be forced to make if we don't take action.

I have heard the other side say 4 more months. This President has had his 4 months. He has had his 4 years and 4 months. In 2004, the President said we are turning the corner. In 2005, the Vice President said the insurgency was in its last throes. In 2006, that was the year in transition. And now in 2007, the President says just be patient.

In the last month alone in Bucks County, we have buried four of our finest sons. Four names have been added to the memorial board outside my office. I, for one, don't want to add any more names.

My Republican colleagues, you have the power today to stop these tragic phone calls, to stop adding faces and names to our memorials. Let's change the direction in Iraq and get back to fighting a smarter war on terror together, not as Democrats and Republicans, but as Americans.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their comments to the Chair, not to others in the second person.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to my colleague and friend, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN).

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of this legislation, H.R. 2956.

I have to remind my colleagues that I am from Florida and it does matter who is the President, and we should never forget the 2000 election because it matters who is the President of the United States.

President Bush intentionally misled the American people by supplying false grounds for going to war, and I personally never supported the war in Iraq.

This war has cost over a half trillion dollars. This war is now costing over $12 billion per month.

I stand with the American people and I wholeheartedly support our troops; yet I cannot support a truly senseless war that has killed 3,600 Americans and left over 26,000 severely wounded.

The soldiers did not vote for this war, but when given a mission, they do the best they can to complete it. The military is doing the job they were sent to do. There was a flaw in the mission from the beginning, and the flaw lies with us.

I want to be clear. The President's checking account has been overdrawn. The Bush administration's manipulation of taxpayer dollars to fund this war is over, and 70 percent of the American people oppose this war. This war needs to come to an immediate end.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the bill. Let's redeploy our men and women.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must remind all Members that remarks in debate may not engage in personalities toward the President or Vice President.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to our distinguished leader, the

gentleman from Maryland, my friend and colleague (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

We have no more serious matter to debate than war and peace. I thank the gentleman for his extraordinary leadership and for bringing this bill to the floor.

I must remark that how different I think the debate would be if not one of the facts were changed but one: that if it were Bill Clinton in the Presidency and all the other facts were the same, I ask my friends on the other side of the aisle what would their comments reflect.

I have said it before many times on this House floor and I will say it again today. Every Member of this great body who swears an oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, is committed to fighting and defeating terrorism. We must not lose sight in this debate that terrorism is a real threat to our people and to our country. We do not lose sight of that on this side of the aisle. We are committed to defeating terrorists and protecting America. Any suggestion otherwise demeans our discourse and is beneath, frankly, the dignity of the Members of this institution and the American people.

After nearly 4½ years in Iraq, a war that has been, I think, superbly peopled by our men and women in uniform but they have been trying to pursue an incompetently planned policy, this is what our Nation has to show for its efforts:

More than 3,600 brave American servicemen and women have been killed in action. More than 26,000 others have been maimed and injured. The American taxpayer has spent $450 billion on this war, with a pending request by the administration for an additional $147 billion.

And yet the President's policy in Iraq is not succeeding. Just today the administration released the ''assessment report'' on Iraq demanded by this Democratic Congress. The bottom line is the Iraq Government has failed to meet a single one of the security, political, and economic milestones for success. Perhaps most jarring, the administration rates as ''unsatisfactory'' the number of Iraqi security units capable of operating independently. That is over 50 months later.

The report states: ''There has been a slight reduction in units assessed as capable of independent operations since January, 2007.'' In other words, the administration says we are going backwards in terms of the capability of the Iraqi forces.

While the administration and congressional Republicans try to put a positive spin on the so-called ''progress'' in Iraq, other respected voices are not so optimistic. Yesterday, Thomas Fingar, the Deputy Director for Analysis at the National Intelligence Council, told the House Armed Services Committee that there have been ''few appreciable gains'' in Iraqi political progress. Even General David Petraeus, our top commander in Iraq, a gentleman that all of us respect as a military leader, told the New York Times that ''while some measures of violence showed a downward trend, it was too early to suggest that there has been a lasting turnaround in the war.'' That is over 50 months later.

Mr. Speaker, last January in an address to the Nation, President Bush stated: ''America will hold the Iraqi government to the benchmarks it has announced.'' We have not done so. We said we would do that, but we have not done so. Today the President shows no intention of changing course even as the Iraqis fail to meet those benchmarks.

Our fight against terrorism must and will be tough, but it also must be smart. And it is long past time that we recognize the following: The President's stay-the-course strategy is not working. The Iraqis must take responsibility for their own country. This war has severely diminished our military readiness and diverted our attention in the war on terror. If that were not the case, Osama bin Laden would still not be at large and al Qaeda would not be reported as being back at the strength that it had on September 11 of 2001.

After $450 billion and precious blood being spilled by American troops and others, we must change course by voting for this legislation, which calls for a responsible redeployment of American forces in Iraq and a comprehensive plan in U.S. policy in Iraq and the broader region.

Mr. Speaker, we must have a specific strategy for missions our remaining forces would undertake as well as plans to engage Iraq's neighboring states and to locate and eliminate al Qaeda and allied terrorist networks, which seek to destabilize and destroy the United States and other democracies. Jonathan Alter at Newsweek just a week ago referred to this as a ''pull and strike'' strategy. Redeploy so that our forces are able to focus on the terrorists, not on the civil war in which they find themselves embroiled.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and an increasing number of our friends on the other side of the aisle have lost confidence in the President's Iraq strategy because we have yet to see demonstrable, sustainable progress in that effort. Our troops have done everything we have asked them.

I'll tell you that we are so proud of those of you who have served in the Armed Forces of the United States. I was so proud of PATRICK MURPHY's statement that he gave here today, so proud of all of those who have served not only in Iraq but in every theater of conflict to which Americans have responded.

But as Senator DOMENICI told the Baltimore Sun yesterday, one of the senior Members of the United States Senate and a leader in the Republican Party, he said this: ''There is no reason to wait . . . I am trying to tell the President that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.''

□ 1645

That is not a Democratic Member of the Senate speaking, that is a senior Republican leader saying there is no reason to wait.

This bill is on this floor this day because there is no reason to wait. Hopefully this body will overwhelmingly respond to the will and focus of the American people, which are pleading for a change in strategy, a new direction, a policy of success against terrorists, and ensuring the safety of our Nation and its people. Let's change our strategy and demand that the Iraqis step up and be responsible for their country.

Our presence there, General Casey observed, has been undermining their taking responsibility, not enhancing it. Let's be responsibly redeploying our troops. And let's focus our resources and efforts on disrupting and destroying the terrorist networks that threaten our national security. This legislation allows us to accomplish that mission.

I urge my colleagues, for this body, for their constituents, for this country, and for our troops, pass this legislation.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD).

Mr. WHITFIELD. You know, every Member of this House has great respect for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee from Missouri and the ranking member from California. And like the American people, most Members of this House are torn in different directions on this issue of our involvement in Iraq and what steps we should take. But this resolution says as a requirement that the Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of Armed Forces in Iraq no later than 120 days after the enactment of this act.

General Petraeus was confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate, and in the supplemental, there was a requirement that, on September 15, General Petraeus would make a report to the Congress on the conditions in Iraq. And I believe that it is premature to come forth with this resolution today. But if it comes back at the end of September, after General Petraeus has made his report, the commanding general in Iraq with the responsibility, I think that all of us have the responsibility to read his report, to make an assessment which would be best for the American people.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I have, and I offer as part of the RECORD, Mr. Speaker, a letter I just received dated July 12 from Lee H. Hamilton from the Woodrow Wilson International Center of Scholars, who is the national president thereof. And I will

read just part of it and not take any more time. But it says, ''Dear Ike, thank you for sharing H.R. 2956 on responsible redeployment from Iraq. The legislation outlines the right change in mission for U.S. forces in Iraq, and redeployment within a responsible time frame. It effectively outlines the functions of the residual force that would remain in Iraq after redeployment, and makes an important contribution by focusing on the need for an accounting of U.S. interests in both Iraq and the wider region.''

I offer this letter at this time.

WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Congressman IKE SKELTON,
Committee on Armed Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR IKE: Thank you for sharing HR 2956 on responsible redeployment from Iraq. The legislation outlines the right change in mission for U.S. forces in Iraq, and redeployment within a responsible timeframe. It effectively outlines the functions of the residual force that would remain in Iraq after redeployment, and makes an important contribution by focusing on the need for an accounting of U.S. interests in both Iraq and the wider region.

Beyond what is outlined in the bill, much needs to be done in Iraq. The training of Iraqi Security Forces must be intensified. An aggressive diplomatic offensive is urgently needed to press for national reconciliation in Iraq, and to advance stability in the region. And some measure of consensus needs to be reached in the country—and between the President and Congress—so that we can move forward with unity of effort.

The American people want a responsible transition for U.S. forces out of Iraq. This resolution provides that transition. It is not perfect, but it moves our national debate forward.

With best wishes,
Sincerely,

LEE H. HAMILTON.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from South Carolina who is our distinguished majority whip, Mr. CLYBURN.

Mr. CLYBURN. Let me thank our chairman for yielding me this time.

To date, we have spent almost half a trillion dollars on the Iraq war. Over 3,600 American lives have been lost, and more than 26,000 Americans have been wounded. When the President announced his escalation plan 6 months ago, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said it would only last a few months. Majority Leader BOEHNER said we would know whether or not the escalation succeeded or failed within 90 days. And Secretary Rice said we would not stay married to a plan that is not working.

Since the President announced this surge, we have lost nearly 600 American troops and spent more than $60 billion. In fact, the monthly cost in lives and resources has increased dramatically since the war began.

Today, the American people received an interim report from the President on his escalation plan. This was the verdict: None of the 18 benchmarks he outlined in January have been reached. In fact, it clearly illustrated how far the Iraqi Government is from political progress and national reconciliation.

A recently released national intelligence report concludes that al Qaeda has reconstituted its core network and may be a stronger terrorist organization than it was a year ago. In fact, it could be closer to pre-9/11 strength and reach.

Republicans have spoken out against this war, failed policies in Iraq yet, out of fear of being called names, are reluctant to vote against this resolution.

What have we come to when if people express their consciences, they are called names? It's beneath the dignity of the sacrifices of our men and women, and I ask my colleagues to vote for this resolution.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, it's been asked that we consider this debate in such a way that our sons and daughters are involved, and that's why the gentleman who just spoke, Mr. WILSON's son has done a tour in Iraq. The gentleman I am going to announce now, Mr. KLINE, has a son who has done a tour as a helicopter pilot in Iraq.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the proponents of this bill are fond of citing historical examples as they declare the futility of combat operations in Iraq. The CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is full of stories describing the failed British invasion of Gallipoli or the far more popular comparisons to the American experience in Vietnam.

Another more prescient historical comparison, however, was made by the British author George Orwell. Contemplating the defeatist rhetoric of the English intelligentsia during the German offensive against Britain in World War II, he remarked, ''The quickest way of ending a war is to lose it. And if one finds the prospect of a long war intolerable, it is natural to disbelieve in the possibility of victory.'' Those in favor of the bill presented on the floor today, Mr. Speaker, do not believe in the possibility of victory, despite the protests of the soldiers and Marines returning from the battlefield saying otherwise.

By advocating a rapid withdrawal, they endorse the quickest way of ending the war, by losing it. It has been less than a month since the full force of troops requested by military commanders arrived in Iraq, but already some have declared the operation to be a failure. General Petraeus arrived in Baghdad in February with a new strategy designed to reinforce the Iraqi security forces confronting al Qaeda, terrorists and Iranian-supplied insurgents. Rather than giving him the opportunity to fully implement his surge strategy, opponents in Congress immediately sought to undermine his credibility and his ability to command.

Mr. Speaker, our troops serving in Iraq don't need 435 armchair generals dictating the tactical movements of troops, as this legislation would surely do. They have true commanders whose professional military skills have been honed by decades of military service. They need us to renew our commitment to them and their commanders. And more importantly, they need us to trust their commanders' decisions.

General Petraeus said in a letter to his troops, ''Success will require discipline, fortitude and initiative, qualities that you have in abundance.'' The question before us today, Mr. Speaker, is, do we have those qualities?

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. I rise in opposition to the bill.

We've lost over 3,600 of our brave service men and women; 1 million innocent Iraqis have perished in the war. We're now telling Iraqis, whose country the U.S. destroyed, whose reconstruction funds the U.S. mishandled, whose social networks have been shredded, stand on your own feet, while we try to steal their oil under the cover of occupation.

This bill will not end the war. This bill will not end the occupation. It doesn't take a vote to end this war. We must inform the administration that the $97 billion appropriated last month is the end of the financing for the war. Use the money that is in the pipeline through October 1st to bring the troops home. Compel the President to put together an international peacekeeping security force which would move in as our troops leave.

We could have our troops home by October 1. The question is whether we're ready to take a stand to do that, or whether or not we're going to vote on resolutions that give the American people the appearance that we want to end the war, without actually addressing the central issue that will end the war: Stop the funding.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow our other two speakers who have sons who have served in Iraq with another gentleman, Mr. AKIN, the gentleman from Missouri, whose son Perry has served a tour in Iraq in the United States Marine Corps.

I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman.

Mr. AKIN. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the reason that Americans send us here to Congress is to have us to solve problems. And I don't think any of us mind, and I certainly don't mind, the accusation by Democrats to say that the war and the situation in Iraq is incompetently planned, or that we should change course, or that we should have bold, new initiatives. In fact, I think that's what we should be discussing. But unfortunately, what we have here today is not a matter of solving problems but rather of playing politics. Because the bill in front of us is not a bold plan. It doesn't have any segment of a plan at all. It just simply says, we're going to pull a bunch of troops out at a particular time. It

doesn't say how many; it just says we are going to pull some troops out. You know, the people who fought World War II would have liked very much to have ended the war more rapidly if they could just put something on a wish list and say, we're going to bring some troops home. But you can't do that until you win a war. And what we have before us is not a bold plan, and it's not a constructive suggestion to say, hey, you've incompetently managed the war, so here's a better way. There's no better way. It offers nothing other than just a bunch of wishes.

Now, if we want to send this to whoever it is that wants to grant wishes, that might be useful, but it's absolutely useless in terms of solving problems. And that's why we should be here.

I have to take the Democrats to task. You forgot, you guys are in the majority. The people elected you to solve problems. This doesn't solve a problem, it just simply says we want to bring some troops home. It doesn't say how or what we're going to do or what the strategy is. It says, oh, we've already done this one thing for a month, and now we just want to turn around and bring the troops home.

I think one thing that we can understand and one thing that we need to do is to stand away from this problem a little bit and put it in the broadest terms, and that is the terms as Americans.

There is one thing that has joined us together that we just celebrated, and that's the Fourth of July. And the Fourth of July we signed a Declaration of Independence, and the heart of that document, the heart of what America believes in is the fact that it says we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; among these is life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And we stand tall on the Fourth of July when we remember that set of principles.

So the job of government is to protect those rights. And who is it that our sons and daughters are now fighting? They're people who believe that we blow up innocent people to make a political statement. They're people who believe that we use terror to compel people so that they don't have freedom and that people cannot pursue happiness and women cannot be educated. And so, is it so odd that we find ourselves fighting against people who believe the diametric opposite of everything America has ever stood for?

I taught those principles to my little kids when they were children. And they started the ''Marine Club.'' Here is a picture of them at a flag ceremony in their rag-tag uniforms bought from their Army surplus store, a bunch of little kids. Now what has happened is they have implemented those ideas. Well, what has happened is this little kid here is now Special Forces Air Force Academy, just graduated last month. And this other one, my son, has graduated from the little Marine club to the big Marine club. Here is a cache of weapons found in Fallujah. There is my son. And the reason that they are there and the reason that he risked his life numerous times is because he does believe there is a God that gives rights to all people, and that governments should protect life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And when we, as Americans, forget that, then we start to lose our sense of direction in what we're doing.

Until there is a specific proposal, then there is nothing being offered at all. There is not leadership. And this is merely politics.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my colleague, my friend, the gentlelady from Ohio (Mrs. JONES).

□ 1700

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, there is a statement that says: ''To believe that God will do everything while you do nothing is not faith but superstition.'' We have an opportunity to do something, not to wait for God to do it.

But let me start where I was. On May 21, I buried my dad, a veteran of the Korean War. He died at age 87. As I stood before that flag-draped coffin, I thought about all the mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, children, nieces and nephews who have buried their loved ones as a result of this Iraqi war—3,600. I don't want to go to another funeral, I have been to five. Not another deployment, I have been to three. Not another memorial, I have been to six.

I want our soldiers to come home as soon as possible. We have an opportunity to do a deployment that makes sense, that fits within all that we can do as Members of Congress. Members of Congress, step up to the plate. Don't be afraid. Vote in favor of this redeployment.

Mr. HUNTER. How much time do we have left, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 5½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Missouri has 9½ minutes remaining.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield myself 4½ minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote against this bill. I have great respect for my friend, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. We work on many bills together, many pieces of legislation, and 99 percent of the time we find common cause in supporting the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

This bill is not one of them. I think that this bill, Mr. Speaker, is a call to retreat by the Democratic leadership of the House, which can only hurt this country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have been here before. I have listened to my colleagues on the Democrat side declare that the operation that we were undertaking in El Salvador to provide a little shield around that fragile government back in the 1980s was going to be ''America's next Vietnam.'' Yet we persevered. We kept that shield in place. We stood up a democratic government. Today, the free government of El Salvador supplies troops who stand side by side with Americans in Iraq.

I was here when Ronald Reagan stood up against the Soviet Union when they were putting SS–20 missiles around our allies, Germany and France, in Europe. Many people on the other side of the aisle said he was going in the wrong direction. He was going to start World War III. We were going to have a nuclear war because of the fact that the President was standing up to the Soviet Union. Yes, he did that, moving Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles to offset the Soviet missiles. At one point, they picked up the telephone and said, Can we talk? Ultimately we brought down the Berlin Wall. We freed, with American perseverance, hundreds of millions of people.

Now, we all agree that if Iraq works, it is to the benefit of the United States. When I say that ''if Iraq works,'' I mean if we have a nation which has a modicum of freedom for its people, a nation which will not be a state sponsor of terrorism, a nation which will be a friend to the United States, then we win. That is in our interest. That is what we are trying to build in Iraq.

We all agree that it is rough and tough and difficult. Mr. Speaker, it is dangerous. We all know that. That is why I had the last three speakers being fathers of Americans who have served in Iraq in the Marine Corps and in the United States Army. So we know it is difficult.

But, you know, every time I hear good news coming out, every time I hear that, I saw the message from one of our senior Marine commanders who said, We are crushing al Qaeda in Anbar province, then I pick up a statement by one of the Democrat leaders saying, We have lost. We have lost the war. I put this piece of legislation in that same category.

Twenty-seven days, less than 4 weeks after we put the surge in full force, we are already being called to leave. Now, we were just criticized, the President was criticized, for saying, This is the starting line. Well, I think we should criticize the Democrats for saying, This is the finish line. I have heard so many Democrat leaders say, We are going to stop the war. That has been said over and over.

Mr. Speaker, there is no Democrat leader here or anywhere who can stop the war. The only thing we can do is leave this battlefield. We can't stop this war any more than the people of Great Britain stopped the war when they just had this incident last week in Scotland. We can't stop this war any more than the victims in the Kobar Towers stopped the war. We can't stop this war any more than the marines in

the Beirut barrack had the power to stop the war. We can't stop this war any more than the sailors of the USS *Cole* had any ability to stop the war. This war has been forced on us. The only way we should end it, the only way we can end it, is to win.

Now we have the surge going on. It has been going on for 27 days. The leader in whom we all vest great confidence, General Petraeus, is to speak to us about the policies, about the tactics, about the strategies, and he will suggest adjustments on September 15. The idea that only 4 weeks after we have fully funded and we have fully deployed this surge we are somehow going to sound the retreat is a real disservice to this mission.

Mr. Speaker, what I would ask of all of our Members, Democrat and Republican, is vote against this call to retreat. If we stop fighting the terrorists, we will start losing this war against the terrorists.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), my friend, my colleague, the Honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri for yielding, and I want to express the appreciation of so many in this Congress and this country to him for his tremendous leadership. For 30 years, he has been a great champion for our men and women in uniform; for the quality of their lives and their families as they serve our country; for their readiness as they prepare to go to war; for their well-being as they fight for our country; for his appreciation of the sacrifice that they and their families are willing to make.

Thank you, Mr. SKELTON, for being such a great leader, and thank you for giving us this opportunity today to speak on behalf of the American people, to take a step to end the war in Iraq and to have a vision of a strategic plan for stability in the Middle East.

Your bill is excellent and your timing, Mr. SKELTON, is perfect, because today the Bush administration released a progress report on the Iraq benchmarks required by the supplemental appropriations bill passed in May. The report makes clear that not even the White House can conclude that there has been significant progress on the Warner resolution benchmarks.

This is hardly surprising, given what is publicly available each day in the media: truck bombs killing scores of people in the markets; the supposedly secure Green Zone is rocked by a 30-inute mortar and rocket barrage; despite 30,000 additional American troops to increase security, Iraqi leaders are urging their people to arm themselves for their own protection; legislation to make the Iraqi political process more inclusive is stalled in the Iraqi legislature; and the cost of the war in precious lives and wounded American heroes continues to rise. Since the surge began, we have lost nearly 600 American troops.

The benchmarks that are being reported on today were endorsed by President Bush and the Government of Iraq to measure political reconciliation and the promotion of security in Iraq. In the 5th year of the war, the President's strategy has failed to meet those key benchmarks.

President Bush continues to urge patience, but what is needed and what the American people are demanding is a new direction. Remaining bogged down in a sectarian civil war in Iraq continues an unacceptable strain on our military and serves as an effective recruiting tool for al Qaeda. Reports about the resilience of al Qaeda in Iraq are alarming, but assessments that the global al Qaeda network is reconstituting its capabilities describes a far greater threat.

The war is not making our military stronger to protect our interests, the American people safer or the Middle East more secure. It prevents a refocusing of our efforts on the real war on terrorism in places like Afghanistan, and it hinders the development of a new direction strategy for greater stability in the Middle East.

As General Batiste has said, ''Iraq is distracting America from what should be the focus of main effort. It is in America's best interests to rethink our national strategy, deliberately disengage from Iraq, refit and rearm our military, get serious about homeland security, and prepare to win the next phase of the struggle against worldwide Islamic extremism.''

The American people see the danger of clinging to an untenable situation in Iraq. That is why by large margins they favor a redeployment of our troops. Passage of Chairman SKELTON's bipartisan bill will reflect the will of the American people and reaffirm the judgment of the House that the redeployment of our troops is a central element and an effective way forward in Iraq.

We will repeat that judgment legislatively as often as necessary, hopefully with an increasing level of support from our Republican colleagues, until pressure from the American people causes the President to change his mind and his policies.

To those who urge that we wait until September, I say that it has been 4½ years and half a trillion dollars, at least. We have already waited too long. The troops in their third and fourth tours in Iraq, those who have been so grievously wounded and the families of those who have died, deserve far better than that.

After more than 3,600 lives have been lost to a flawed strategy, we have a responsibility to create a new direction. After spending $329 million every day, $329 million every day on the war in Iraq, on a war that is not making our country safer, we have an obligation to change course. After 5 years of a failed policy in Iraq, we have a duty, not just to voice our opposition, but to vote to end the war.

Chairman SKELTON's bipartisan bill offers a step we can take today toward bringing the troops home, to creating a strategic vision for stability in the Middle East and for beginning to rearm our military.

Let us pass this bill and those that will follow in the coming weeks and provide the new direction on Iraq that the American people demand and that is so urgently needed. I urge a ''yes'' vote on the Skelton bill.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to our final speaker, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER), the Republican leader.

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague from California for yielding and thank all of the Members for what has really been a very serious debate about our efforts in Iraq.

When we think about what we went through this past spring, the fight over funding our troops that went on for about 112 days here in the House, I had thought that we had come to some resolution. Forty-eight days ago we sent to the President of the United States a bill passed by this House, passed by the Senate and signed into law that would fund our troops through the end of September.

□ 1715

That same bill, we asked General Petraeus to report back to the Congress on July 15 his interim report and asked him to give a more complete report by September 15 of this year. And here we are some 48 days later saying, we give up.

One can only imagine why this bill is on the floor today. If Members were serious about this bill, we would have seen it come through committee, come through the Rules Committee. No, no, this bill showed up Tuesday night about 9 o'clock out of thin air that we were going to have this debate this week. One can only look at what is happening on the floor of the House and describe it as a partisan political stunt, because that is exactly what it is.

This House voted to support our troops, to fund our troops, and to fund our effort in Afghanistan and in Iraq. And here we are, once again, back here posing for holy pictures, as our good friend from Wisconsin would say.

This bill that we have before us makes our troops pawns in a partisan political battle. I don't think that is what anyone wants. I think this bill on the floor today undermines General Petraeus and undermines the mission that he has to help make Iraq and America safe.

So what we have here is not leadership; it is negligence. My colleague, the majority leader, my friend from Maryland, and the Speaker of the House both say we want to fight the terrorists; we want to fight them where they are. Well, who is our biggest enemy in

Iraq today? Who is the biggest fight that we have in Iraq today? It is al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is losing, and that is why we see the bigger bombs going off and the bigger demonstrations and the bigger casualties, because they are losing and trying to influence public opinion here in the United States.

But what surprises me about what we are doing here today is the willful ignoring of the consequences of failure in Iraq. If we fail in Iraq, we know what happens, we make America less safe. We know that we will provide a safe haven for al Qaeda to operate around the world out of their new safe haven that they will have in Iraq. We will destabilize the Middle East, we will endanger Israel. We will embolden the Iranians even more than they have already been emboldened, and we will allow al Qaeda to be stronger and to be able to recruit more people to kill Americans and our allies around the world. These are serious consequences for the American people and our allies around the world, and we can't shrink from our responsibility here.

General Petraeus is making progress. Not as much progress as we would all like for him to make, but he is making progress on the ground, as he reported in the report that came out today. The Iraqi government has made some progress. Not nearly enough, but to just pull the rug out from under General Petraeus, to pull the rug out from under our troops that are in Iraq fighting for our freedom and fighting for the freedom of the Iraqi people at this moment is absolutely the most negligent action that I have seen this House take yet on this issue.

Why can't we sit back and allow General Petraeus's plan to have a chance to succeed? Why can't we wait until September 15, as we had all agreed, for his final report to come forward and to assess the progress that is being made and what, if any, new direction ought to be taken?

I believe, and I think the American people believe, that we ought to allow the generals on the ground in Iraq to make those suggestions to us and not sit back and let politicians here in Washington make decisions about our future and about our safety.

But while we are sitting here debating this meaningless bill that we have before us, we could be acting on serious legislation to help make America safer. There is a giant loophole in the terrorist surveillance program that means that activity between terrorists overseas cannot be acted upon and cannot be listened to by this government. There is information that would help make America safe, that would bring more terrorists to justice; information that is being left on the table because of partisan political games in this House. Why don't we bring the FISA modernization bill to this floor? Why don't we give the NSA the terrorist surveillance program and other agencies the ability to track these terrorist activities and these terrorist phone calls and information movement that we know today that we can't touch and we can't use?

We all know through reports over the last couple of days that al Qaeda has increased in its strength. We also know from news reports over the last couple of days that there has been increasing chatter among terrorists around the world. And yet here we are debating a meaningless bill that undermines our troops, ignoring the fact that there is information that could help keep America safer that we can't touch because this House will not act. I think that is negligent, and I think it is irresponsible.

I would urge my colleagues to let's let General Petraeus and the troops have a chance to succeed. Let's help them in their mission to help make Iraq safer and to make America safer, and the way we do that is to take this bill that we have before us and defeat it.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I just heard the minority leader say that we are willfully ignoring the consequences of Iraq. That is what I'm talking about, the willful consequences of Iraq when I spoke a few moments ago about the stretch and the strain and the difficulty of gluing our Army and Marines back together again.

This is serious business. We have a readiness crisis due to our extended operations in Iraq. Readiness in the Army's combat units has fallen to a dangerous level. Half of the Army's active brigades are in combat, and the remaining units are preparing for deployment. Units preparing for combat do not have all of their assigned personnel or equipment when preparing for combat. Combat units are experiencing equipment shortfalls; and let me mention that we have lost over 2,000 trucks and Humvees, over 100 tanks and armored vehicles, and over 100 aircraft. Combat units' readiness is being sustained at the expense of nondeployed units through the use of emergency war stocks.

I am worried. My heart breaks because no one seems to be listening on the other side, and no one who is opposed to this legislation mentioned in this debate anything about the stretch and the strain on our ground forces of the United States. That concerns me. That is the willful ignoring of consequences of Iraq. Something must be done.

Lee Hamilton, the co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, spoke in a letter to me, which I read a few moments ago, endorsing this legislation as a responsible bill: We must do something, and it must be done today. This is serious business.

Let me salute the eloquence of my friend from California, Mr. HUNTER. He asked us to wait until September. We have had four Septembers already in Iraq. And you know what? It reminds me, and maybe some of those who have a little gray in their hair, Mr. Speaker, will recall a song that was popular decades ago, and that line in that song, the September song, that says, we haven't got time for the waiting game. We don't have time for the waiting game.

This is the right time, the right measure, the right issue. It is right for our ground forces. It is right for those in uniform. It is right for their families. It is right for our country. We have been engaged in Iraq since March of 2003. We have threats yet unforeseen.

If we continue to strain our ground forces as they are, we will not be ready for them. Hopefully they never come, but as sure as God made little green apples, those threats will be there. That's the purpose of this. The readiness of our forces and the capability of what they need to do for us in the days ahead, that is our job under the Constitution, to raise and maintain. That's what we are doing.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I say that we need to pass this legislation. We need to do so to pass the responsibility back to the Iraqis, to keep our forces in a higher state of readiness, and to make sure that the future is all the more safer for those of us here in our country.

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this renewed debate on the war in Iraq. Iraq is today's signature issue, and it is one of the most divisive and complex ones before this Congress. The choices we make regarding Iraq will establish a legacy for the United States that will define our policy toward the Middle East region for a generation or longer. For that reason, it is my hope that we, as an institution and, indeed, as a country can agree upon a policy that will best protect our national interests and those of our allies and supports those servicemembers and civiians—and their families—who so bravely serve our country today in Iraq and elsewhere around the world.

If enacted, H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, the legislation before us today, would significantly change the direction of current operations in Iraq. Notably, this legislation would require the Secretary of Defense to commence the reduction of the number of United States Armed Forces personnel deployed in Iraq—beginning as early as 120 days after enactment of this bill—to a more limited presence by April 1, 2008. Also notable, this legislation would require the President to submit to Congress a new comprehensive strategy that would guide future operations in Iraq and that would include specific plans for diplomatic initiatives to engage United States allies and others in the region to bring stability to Iraq.

This strategy, according to H.R. 2956, would be written to reflect an honest assessment of the United States' national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region. The document would be written to include the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq. This bill takes into account the importance of protecting United States diplomatic personnel and

combating terrorism in Iraq in any redeployment strategy. The strategy would also include a justification of the minimum force levels required to protect United States national security interests in Iraq after April 1, 2008, based upon a description of the specific missions of the Armed Forces to be undertaken. Of those missions, the strategy would require an assessment of the extent to which military personnel would fulfill roles traditionally performed by diplomatic personnel.

H.R. 2956 will generate Significant debate. Withdrawal timelines and a date have been discussed during recent debate on this issue. Consensus on this aspect of this bill will remain hard to reach. But this bill helps advances our national discussion with respect to the war in Iraq by calling for a new comprehensive strategy. Such a comprehensive strategy is long overdue.

I introduced H.R. 744, the Iraq Policy Revitalization and Congressional Oversight Enhancement Act on January 31, 2007. H.R. 744 would help enhance congressional oversight of Operation Iraqi Freedom by requiring the President to transmit periodically to Congress a consolidated, comprehensive report that would detail the terms of completion for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The bill would also require the President to seek to enter into a multilateral agreement—based on that plan—to help provide for the completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am encouraged that the legislation before us today would require a similar plan be drafted by the President and communicated to Congress. Our soldiers and diplomats need a comprehensive, actionable plan that defines what it is that they need to accomplish in order to successfully complete their missions.

It is true the Government of Iraq must increasingly shoulder the burden of, and better fulfill its obligation to, govern from moderate positions, with uniformity, and with regard to the rule of law. But recent history tells us that we cannot rely on the Government of Iraq to govern in that manner. As H.R. 744 notes, the inability or unwillingness of the Government of Iraq to govern in moderate terms contributes to violence against United States servicemembers and Coalition forces, creates barriers to national reconciliation in Iraq, and impedes the expeditious completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the return of our servicemembers to their peacetime duty stations. The outcome of policies that are overly dependent upon a reportedly broken, corrupt, and sectarian government delivering on complicated policies, against great odds, and during a compressed period of time is uncertain. This fact underscores the importance of and the need for a new comprehensive strategy.

I believe that continued, honest and open exchange of views on the substance of what our country and our allies must achieve in Iraq in order to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom is needed. Finding an achievable, expeditious, and honorable way to complete Operation Iraqi Freedom should be a primary goal for all of us. We owe this to those who have sacrificed so much for this mission. But the situation in Iraq will not yield a solution easily. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to find one. In doing so we will be helping shape in the best way possible the legacy future generations of Americans will inherit and the one we will have to defend to history. The United States assumed a moral obligation to bring a minimum of order to Iraq when we, in a preemptive manner, attacked that county four years ago. History will judge us harshly if we act to abandon this obligation. The consideration of H.R. 2956 allows us an opportunity to formulate a national strategy that more effectively addresses the realities of Iraq.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.''

This legislation would accomplish what the majority of the American people have said over and over that they support—the redeployment of American troops from Iraq. H.R. 2956 would require this redeployment to begin within 120 days, with completion to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

The evidence continues to mount that the surge is not working. More than 3,500 troops have lost their lives and more than 26,000 have been wounded since this war began. The costs are too great to continue this failed policy.

The progress report that was presented to Congress today states that the Iraqi government has made limited progress in meeting political, economic, or security benchmarks and in some instances has made virtually no progress at all. The President said that when the Iraqis stand up, our troops will stand down. More than four years later, we are still waiting.

Increasingly, Republican senators are coming forward to announce that they support a change in policy in Iraq. I am glad that they are finally accepting what many of us have been saying for months. Yet the President continues to dig in by promoting his failed policy against the will of the American people and despite dwindling support within his own party.

This bill establishes a new direction for our forces in Iraq. I urge my colleagues to listen to their constituents and support this legislation.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation calling for the safe and responsible redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. Make no mistake about it: The administration's incompetence in planning and executing the post-war occupation has brought us to this point. It is now Congress's responsibility to stand up for the majority of American voices who seek an end to this war. This bill provides for a redeployment of our troops not only so that they will be safe, but also so they will be focused on securing our Nation, not caught in the crossfire of a sectarian civil war in Iraq. We must provide for our men and women in uniform and their families.

Some assert with no basis that the war in Iraq has made us safer when, in fact, the opposite is true. I am deeply troubled by today's report from the National Counterterrorism Center which states that al-Qaeda is stronger now than at any point since 9/11. Terrorist cells capitalized on our preoccupations in Iraq to reestablish a presence in the Middle East and beyond. For years, the Administration has stubbornly insisted that Iraq is the central front of the War on Terrorism, but today's report clearly indicates just how damaging this war has been to our national security.

The President's progress report on Iraq issued today shows unsatisfactory improvement of security benchmarks. The report predicts a rise in insurgent violence in the coming months and an increased effort to disrupt life for Iraqis. In addition, there appears to be no improvement in eliminating the sectarian influences that have infiltrated Iraqi security forces. This is not acceptable. The administration has not delivered on its promises in Iraq and now we must move forward to establish a new direction. It simply is not fair to ask our soldiers and marines to continue to police someone else's civil war. It is especially irresponsible when considering the mountains of evidence from our own intelligence agencies pronouncing that this conflict cannot be solved by our military might alone. We must refocus our attention on the true threats to our Nation and our citizens.

Americans owe a debt of gratitude to our troops and their families for the sacrifices they have made during this difficult time. Servicemembers have had to endure difficult assignments and failed civilian leadership; but they have done so with honor and dignity. We must not forget the families who had to go without their loved ones for months at a time; the missed birthdays, baseball games, long nights away.

Mr. Speaker, the time for talking has ended; we must act, without delay, to redeploy our brave troops out of Iraq.

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this legislation.

The American people are not happy with the conflict in Iraq; I am not pleased either. Every day, my constituents tell me their concerns with Iraq, and I can understand their desire to put this behind us.

The reality is, however, that we cannot snap our fingers and make things all better; it's not simply going to go away.

My friends on the other side of the aisle have argued for years that we rushed headlong into Iraq without seriously considering the long-term consequences. Yet with this legislation they are repeating the very same mistake, only in reverse.

Staying the course is not a viable option, but neither is the fallacy of the orderly, phased withdrawal proposed by this legislation. You cannot gradually blow up a dam; once we begin to leave, chaos will immediately ensue. So I ask my colleagues, what do you propose to do after you order our troops away? What's your plan? Where's your responsible and workable strategy and vision?

Unfortunately, such a scenario may prove inevitable. But my colleagues hold forth this legislation as a plan: it's not. It's political pabulum. It might give politicians cover, but it exposes our servicemen to danger even greater than they already face. Ethnic, tribal, and religious killings will increase by an order of magnitude. The current refugee situation, already a disaster for Iraq's neighbors, will be dwarfed by the exodus to come. Our own men and women in uniform will be standing in front of a tsunami of violence.

What is required is a thoughtful, deliberative plan to make the best of an undeniably bad situation. Such a plan is embodied in the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group—the product of a concerted, bipartisan and sincere effort on the part of some of our brightest citizens.

I have long advocated we seriously follow—or at least debate—the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. Foreign policy and diplomatic issues are usually complicated, nuanced and multi-leveled; the situation in Iraq is no different. Yet all we have been given to consider are all-or-nothing propositions.

I would welcome a bona fide discussion regarding how to move forward in Iraq and in the Middle East generally—that is what we owe the American people. What we have today is nothing but four hours cooing to the other side's base. This is not leadership. No amendments were made in order. There was no reaching out to Republicans like myself who felt the surge was a mistake and are looking for another direction. What we have is a framed ''take it or leave it,'' ''my way or the highway'' approach. That approach got us where we are—a healthy dialogue with options is needed to appropriately disengage.

Two months remain until General Petraeus will be summoned before Congress. He will give us—as we have charged him to do—an honest assessment on where this ''surge'' has lead our troops and the Iraqi people. I hope at that time, whether his testimony reveals success or failure, this body will have the wherewithal to have a serious, open debate on what options we have left.

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the legislation before us today mandating a hard deadline for the Secretary of Defense to significantly reduce our troop presence in Iraq.

Over the last several months, similar attempts on the part of the Democratic leadership to require an arbitrary date for troop withdrawal have gone nowhere, wasting precious time debating legislation that would be vetoed by the President. While I believe strongly that we must change course in Iraq and bring our men and women home, it would be a mistake for Congress to think it could disregard the complexity of this conflict by simply picking a random date for withdrawal. Forcing such an important decision without considering the advice of military and foreign policy leaders, could lead to the loss of many more lives and open the door for sectarian chaos to spread across the entire Middle East.

For this reason, I have been a leading supporter of the Iraq Study Group, also known as the Baker-Hamilton Commission, which in December 2006 outlined a comprehensive approach for bringing a responsible conclusion to the conflict in Iraq. In fact, in early 2007, I went to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives and called on the Bush Administration to change course in Iraq and implement the Study Group's recommendations for a new, robust diplomatic offensive in the Middle East. Since then, Secretary of State Rice has taken several encouraging steps to open the lines of communication with key nations like Iran and Syria, and I am hopeful that my efforts, and those of my colleagues, have prompted the White House to improve its diplomatic efforts in the region.

This September, Gen. David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker will submit a very important report regarding the conflict in Iraq. While I am hopeful that this report will show progress, I also feel strongly that we must begin developing a responsible postsurge strategy. Therefore, on June 5, 2007, I joined over forty other Members of Congress—Republicans and Democrats—in introducing the Iraq Study Group Recommendations Implementation Act. The Study Group recommendations, which would bolster diplomacy, improve political and economic reconstruction, and handoff the combat mission to the Iraqis, represent the first truly bipartisan proposal for ending this conflict and bringing Americans home.

Clearly, there is no easy solution in Iraq. Still, it is extremely discouraging that the Democratic leadership continues to hold votes on ''symbolic'' withdrawal timelines, while refusing to consider the bipartisan Iraq Study Group proposal—legislation that as of today has been cosponsored by 25 Democrats and 33 Republicans in the House.

Mr. Speaker, the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission serves as a model for how we must work together in a responsible fashion to stabilize Iraq and get our brave soldiers off the streets. Rather than wasting time debating arbitrary timelines that disregard the complexity of the situation, it is critical that we come together now in support of a responsible exit strategy. I am encouraged that thirteen additional Members of Congress have signed-on to the Iraq Study Group Implementation Act since we introduced it over a month ago and I am hopeful that Members from across the political spectrum will join me in uniting behind this crucial effort.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2956 which, while a well-intended attempt to reduce our nation's seemingly unlimited military commitment in Iraq, is in so many respects deeply flawed.

I have been one of the strongest opponents of military action against Iraq. I voted against the initial authorization in 2002 and I have voted against every supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war. I even voted against the initial ''Iraq regime change'' legislation back in 1998. I believe our troops should be brought back to the United States without delay. Unfortunately, one of the reasons I oppose this legislation is that it masquerades as a troop withdrawal measure but in reality may well end up increasing U.S. commitments in the Middle East

Mr. Speaker, this is precisely the debate we should have had four years ago, before Congress voted to abrogate its Constitutional obligation to declare war and transfer that authority to the president. Some in this body were rather glib in declaring the constitution antiquated while voting to cede the ability to initiate hostilities to the President. Now we see the result of ignoring the Constitution, and we are bringing even more mayhem to the process with this legislation.

To those who believe this act would somehow end the war, I simply point to the title for Section 3 of the bill, which states, ''Requirement to reduce the number of armed forces in Iraq and transition to a limited presence of the Armed Forces in Iraq.'' However the number of troops are limited, this legislation nevertheless will permit an ongoing American military presence in Iraq with our soldiers continuing to be engaged in hostilities.

I also wish to draw attention to Section 4(b)(1), which mandates the President to submit a ''Strategy for Iraq'' by the beginning of next year. This ''strategy'' is to include:

> A discussion of United States national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region and the diplomatic, political, economic, and military components of a comprehensive strategy to maintain and advance such interests as the Armed Forces are redeployed from Iraq pursuant to section 3 of this Act.

In other words, far from extricating ourselves from the debacle in Iraq, this bill would set in motion a policy that could lead to a wider regional commitment, both financially and militarily. Such a policy would be disastrous for both our overextended national security forces and beleaguered taxpayers. This could, in fact, amount to an authorization for a region-wide ''surge.''

Congress' job is to change the policy on Iraq, not to tell the military leaders how many troops they should have. I have attempted to do this with H.R. 2605, a bill to sunset after a six month period the authorization for military activity in Iraq. During this period a new plan for Iraq could be discussed and agreed. Plan first, authorization next, execution afterward. That is what we should be doing in Iraq.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, this legislation brings us no closer to ending the war in Iraq. It brings us no closer to bringing our troops home. It says nothing about withdrawal, only about redeployment. It says nothing about reducing U.S. presence in the Middle East, and may actually lead to an expanded U.S. presence in the region. We have no guarantee the new strategy demanded by this legislation would not actually expand our military activities to Iran and Syria and beyond. I urge my colleagues to reject this legislation and put forth an effective strategy to end the war in Iraq and to bring our troops home.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today the administration released its ''Assessment Report'' on Iraq. While attempting to tout ''progress,'' it is plain to see that this is more of the same rhetoric that has become so commonplace in this administration. The sad truth is that since President Bush launched this war, more than 3,600 American service men and women have been killed in Iraq, more than 26,000 have been injured, and the American taxpayer has spent nearly half a trillion dollars on this war.

The report highlights that the Iraqi government has not met a single one of the 18 security, political, and economic milestones that the Congress laid out as measurements for success. It also substantiates the fact that of the 18 benchmarks Congress laid out, Iraqis are making progress on only eight. The report also shows us that Iraqi security forces are not providing even-handed enforcement of the law and that Militia presence is still a prevalent force within the security services of a number of ministries.

It is for this reason that I am in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. In addition to requiring the redeployment of American forces this legislation requires the development of a comprehensive strategy for U.S. policy in Iraq and limits missions any remaining forces in Iraq may undertake to duties such as counter-terrorism, and protecting American personnel at the embassy in Iraq.

It has been said that faith without action is merely superstition. We now have the opportunity to change course in this war. My father was a World War II veteran. He died a few months ago at the age of 87. As I looked at the flag draped across his coffin, I thought about the many mothers, fathers and families that had to bury their loved ones, many of them barely adults, and see that flag draped across their caskets.

I, along with the American people, have no more patience with regards to this war in Iraq. I've been to three deployments, five funerals and countless memorial services; I don't want to go to any more. I want to be able to go to one last homecoming celebration when we can bring an end to this war.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army myself, I strongly support our troops, our veterans and their families. Our troops have done everything they have been asked to do and done it exceptionally well. I am tremendously proud of all the troops from North Carolina and across America who have done their duty so admirably. They are our heroes, and we salute them. But as the Representative for Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base, I am very concerned about the state of readiness of America's armed forces.

I have traveled to Iraq twice, and after I returned last year, I said the Administration must change this failed policy. Specifically, I said that we need more focus on the threat of international terrorists. The National Counterterrorism Center has released a report today entitled: ''Al-Qaida Better Positioned To Strike the West'' that concludes Osama Bin Laden's network has been reconstructed while America's military is bogged down in the civil war in Iraq, with no end in sight.

H.R. 2956, written by Chairman IKE SKELTON of the Armed Services Committee, one of the most respected Members of this body and an expert on military policy, is a good first step for this needed new direction. It requires the Iraqi leaders to begin to provide for the security of their own country by redeploying American combat troops from the sectarian civil war and reconstituting our readiness and transitioning American forces to the mission of effective counterterrorism anywhere in the world where radical jihadists threaten America and our interests. Let me be clear that H.R. 2956 maintains the flexibility of the Commander in Chief to direct the operations of the armed forces. It simply calls for a change in policy and public accountability for a comprehensive U.S. strategy for Iraq.

North Carolina's senior Senator stated it well this week when she said, ''It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008.'' This bill begins to do just that. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for it.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of ''H.R. 2956, The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act,'' and had I been on the floor today, I would have voted ''yes.''

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend due to the fact that I was given the high honor of receiving the NAACP Spingarn Award. However, this is an extremely important piece of legislation. One of our greatest responsibilities is the protection of our soldiers. The Democrats are determined to end this war and bring our young men and women back home. H.R. 2956 will now provide such a policy that will allow us to meet our national security interests in Iraq and the broader Middle East region by maintaining a minimal force. The Administration has provided a failed policy and it is time for a new direction. We understand that this transition must be well thought out and handled responsibly; with a view toward an enduring national security interest in the region.

This legislation, acknowledges that our military has accomplished the mission they were given in the original 2002 authorization to use force and that Iraq must now take leadership for its own future. For years Democrats have advocated for the responsible redeployment of American forces from Iraq. The relocation and redistribution of our soldiers is long overdue and enough American lives have been sacrificed for a failed policy. Democrats have argued that the Iraqis must take primary accountability for their country and their security. American presence in Iraq must be re-focused away from playing referee in a civil war. We must focus and limit our efforts to military missions such as counter-terrorism, training Iraqi security forces and protecting American personnel at the embassy.

The bill requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008. The bill also requires a comprehensive strategy by January 1, 2008 for U.S. policy in Iraq, including a discussion of American national security interests in Iraq and the broader region, the specific missions remaining forces would undertake, and minimum force levels required to accomplish them. Finally, it requires the President to submit updates on the use of and need for any forces remaining in Iraq every 90 days starting on July 1, 2008. The President has been given ample time to bring our soldiers home. It is now time for us to act on their behalf.

I am committed to the homecoming of our brave men and women who have so valiantly completed their mission. So, I am honored to support this legislation.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2956, Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act of 2007.

For months, I, along with many of my colleagues in this chamber, have been calling on the President to forge a new direction with the war in Iraq. Our pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

Despite failing to meet his own benchmarks of progress, despite new reports of the unsustainable cost of this war, despite the tremendous dissatisfaction and disenchantment of the American people and members of his own party—the President recently made public statements to the effect that he is unwilling to change the course and try a new strategy.

The American people are dissatisfied with the deteriorating situation in Iraq. They are tired of finger-pointing and political gamesmanship. They want some answers, and they quite rightly expect and deserve one. As their elected representatives and leaders, I believe it is our responsibility in Congress to work together to move this country forward to an honest solution.

It is clear that American troops have accomplished their military mission. Yet we have now tasked them with forging political compromise as well, leaving them in the middle of a burgeoning civil war in Iraq. It is widely recognized that the sectarian strife taking place in Iraq right now cannot be solved through military means alone, and the President's refusal to entertain any new strategies has put our troops in an untenable position. I cannot continue in good conscience to ask our brave troops to risk their lives because I don't believe their sacrifice is being met with an equal commitment from the Iraqi people. The tough but necessary political compromises are not being made.

While the Iraqis are moving toward a transparent and effective government, what is missing is the necessary political accommodation to move the country towards reconciliation. Unfortunately, Iraqis by themselves appear incapable of achieving political progress. Instead, years later, they continue to lean on the United States and our military for stability, teetering on the brink of full-blown civil war without the will to make the political compromises necessary to peace.

Be assured that I am the last person in this chamber that wants to take irresponsible actions that would take the country into complete chaos. But American military power is not the solution to the war. More troops, more time, more money—these are not the answers. Congress needs to understand, as the American people do, that we must begin planning for a responsible withdrawal and redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. H.R. 2956 provides for a safe and orderly reduction of troops in Iraq and a transition to a limited presence of American troops in country for force protection, training of Iraqi Security Forces, and counterterrorism missions. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

We must send a clear message to the Iraqi government that the patience of the American people is not endless, and that they must take control of their future. Passage of H.R. 2956 will help send that message.

I believe strongly that we must not wait any longer to send this message. The time to act is now, to force the hand of this Administration and the Iraqi government. Waiting any longer will simply lead to more fatalities for U.S. soldiers, Iraqi military, and civilians.

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks and undying admiration for our men and women in uniform for their service to our country. May God bless them and their families during this difficult time. May God provide his special blessings and care for those who fell in the line of duty. And may God continue to bless these United States of America.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill because I strongly support a responsible redeployment of our troops from Iraq.

It should not have been necessary for us to consider this bill today. Back in March, I voted for, and Congress passed, legislation that would have begun a draw-down of combat troops in favor of a disengagement strategy in Iraq. Regrettably, however, the president vetoed that legislation and then moved in exactly the opposite direction by escalating the number of troops committed to Iraq.

So, while a war can't be effectively led by committee, by failing to exercise responsible leadership, the president continues to make it necessary for Congress to assert itself. And thus the House is acting again today—and whatever the outcome, we will act again and again until we find the necessary support to change course in Iraq.

The war in Iraq has cost this Nation the blood of its soldiers, the treasure of its citizens, and the good will of our allies around the world. The average number of attacks, Iraqi civilian deaths, and coalition deaths are all at their highest levels since the invasion. Over 3,600 American soldiers have died in Iraq, and we are spending over $10 billion every month to continue this failed policy.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I must point out that the time is rapidly approaching when we will not be able to sustain the numbers of troops now deployed in Iraq without calling back our National Guard and Reserve for second or third tours or extending the tours of current active duty troops beyond the already extended 15 months.

And our increasing military and financial commitment to Iraq limits our options for addressing other critical national security concerns even as a new intelligence report indicates that al Qaeda is operationally stronger than a year ago. The most disturbing news is that al Qaeda has regrouped to an extent not seen since 2001.

Proponents of the President's escalation—the so-called ''surge''—say we haven't given it a chance to succeed. But it has been under way since January, with the Iraqi government fully aware of the steps toward reconciliation it needs to take to enable U.S. forces to stay—and still, those steps aren't being taken. Today's interim report from the Pentagon tries to make a bad situation look better, listing ''satisfactory'' progress on a number of benchmarks required by the Congress several months ago. But in reality, as the report states, ''the security situation in Iraq remains complex and extremely challenging,'' the ''economic picture is uneven'' and political reconciliation is lagging.

I had hoped that by holding the president and the Iraqi government accountable for achieving these benchmarks, we would gain the leverage necessary to pressure the Iraqi government to forge the political solution we all know is required. But it appears that the Iraqi government is either unable or unwilling to bring its feuding factions together to achieve these goals.

The Pentagon's report blames those of us pushing for redeployment for the lack of progress toward political reconciliation, saying it has been hampered by ''increasing concern among Iraqi political leaders that the United States may not have a long term-commitment to Iraq.''

But if the Iraqis won't make progress when we're there—and then threaten that they can't make progress if we leave—under what conditions will we see progress? The president has asked Congress to wait to act for the next progress report due in September. But what are we waiting for? He has dressed up his new approaches in many different ways since this war started over four years ago, and yet little has changed.

What we need—and what many Democrats and Republicans alike are calling for—is a responsible redeployment from Iraq. That is what the bipartisan Iraq Study Group ultimately called for, and that is the main reason I introduced legislation to implement its recommendations. I continue to hold out hope that we can forge a bipartisan consensus in favor of adopting the ISG as a foundation for a phased withdrawal strategy. I believe in this approach because responsible redeployment would allow Iraqis to take control of their own security by reducing U.S. combat forces while limiting the U.S. military to missions such as counter-terrorism, protecting U.S. Embassy personnel, and training Iraqi security forces. This bill will also allow necessary flexibility for our military forces to continue strikes against al Qaeda in Iraq.

This legislation calls for the beginning of redeployment and a troop draw-down within the next four months. It takes a different approach from H.R. 2237, the bill introduced by Representative JIM MCGOVERN (D–MA) that I opposed two months ago, in that it would not prohibit funding for our troops already in Iraq, and it requires the president to submit a comprehensive strategy providing specific plans for diplomatic initiatives and justifying the number of U.S. troops who would remain and explaining their missions.

I do question whether we can extricate all combat troops by April 2008, as it calls for—it could take as long as six months to move over one hundred thousand soldiers and their gear and to do this safely. This is one military exercise that we have to take seriously and spend time and resources to plan—because it could mean life or death for our men and women in uniform. But I believe we should set a target date now and begin this planning. This bill would force a change in strategy and mandate the start of a phased withdrawal and redeployment, and that is why I will vote for it.

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. Delivering the solemn promise we made to set a new direction in Iraq, this legislation provides us with the opportunity to reaffirm our support for the responsible redeployment of our troops and a refocusing of our efforts on the real threat that is facing America—fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, tracking down Osama bin Laden, and preventing another terrorist attack against America.

Along with a great many of my colleagues, I spoke out against the President's surge strategy when it was announced in January. We argued then, as we reiterate today, that Iraq is engaged in a civil war and thus political, not military, solutions are needed to address the problems facing the region. Yet, the President continues to operate under the assumption that somehow, some way, there is a military path to success. In other words, his strategy continues to be ''stay the course'' writ large.

It has now been seven months since the President announced his surge strategy, with the stated goal of providing stability in Iraq so that the political reforms that are needed to secure the region can take place. Since then, more than 25,000 additional troops have deployed to Iraq, of whom 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded. All of this while the Iraqi government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January, violence rates are at an all time high, and a recent government report estimates that al Qaeda is the strongest it has been since the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Simply put, it is long past time for our involvement in this tragic episode to come to an end. The Iraqi people are the only ones that can bring a peaceful conclusion to this war.

It is unfair to ask our troops and their families to continue to sacrifice while Iraqi leaders have done so little to achieve the political and security goals asked of them. Therefore, it is imperative that we begin the gradual redeployment of troops as soon as possible to protect their lives and ensure the safety of America.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate my opposition to this war. I believe the decision to invade Iraq is the single most devastating and misguided foreign policy decision our Nation has ever made. I will vote for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act because I believe it is time to bring our troops home and end our involvement in this civil war.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, and I thank Chairman SKELTON for his leadership and his dedication to the readiness of our troops and the continuing excellence of the United States armed forces.

The President continues to ask this Congress and the American people to ''stay the course'' in Iraq. Well, Mr. President, today the American people and the Congress say, ''No more!!''

Instead, I add my voice once again to the growing number of retired military generals, the Iraq Study Group, and untold thousands of rank-and-file on the front lines who are calling for a new direction in Iraq.

The success of our military depends on a sound strategy. Yet, instead of fighting terrorists in the mountains of Afghanistan, our armed forces are overextended after four years of refereeing a civil war in the sands of Iraq.

The President's escalation of this war,—his so-called ''surge''—is not working. That much is clear. Since the escalation of this war 6 months ago, more than 25,000 troops have been sent to Iraq, 600 more U.S. soldiers have died and more than 3,000 troops have been wounded. Countless thousands of Iraqis are dead, and today the violence in Iraq is at an all-time high!

Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq, but the Iraqi government has failed to meet any of the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January. Political reconciliation within Iraq is non-existent. A change of course is long overdue.

The time has come for the United States to responsibly re-deploy our troops from Iraq and to refocus our efforts on protecting Americans from terrorism. The time has come for Iraqis to take primary responsibility for their country and their security.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will do exactly that.

Let me be clear on one additional point. Democrats support the troops. As a Member of the Appropriations Committee, I have consistently voted to fund our troops and provide our soldiers in the line of fire with the resources they need.

I do this because our brave service men and women are not risking their lives each and every day for one political party or the other. They are risking their lives for America.

Our Nation owes our troops a strategy that is worthy of their sacrifice. But ''stay the course'' is not that strategy. It is a slogan that continues to fail them.

No, Mr. Speaker, if we really want to support our troops, it is now time to get them out of Iraq and re-deploy them to other areas where they can fight the terrorists who have attacked, and who continue to threaten our Nation.

Ms. DEGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.''

This legislation mandates that we begin withdrawing our troops from Iraq within 120 days of enactment. This redeployment would have to be completed by April 2008. This is a commonsense measure to bring an end to our military involvement in Iraq. Frankly it is mindboggling that American troops are still fighting there in the first place.

For over 4 years we have worked to establish a secure, safe, and peaceful democracy in Iraq. Our military has done a valiant job in doing everything we asked of it. We have lost over 3,600 soldiers and more than 26,000 have been wounded in this effort. We have spent about $450 billion. Unfortunately, death and destruction still reign in Iraq.

President George W. Bush's plan is not working and the evidence of failure is mounting. President Bush announced his troop

''surge'' 6 months ago. During that time about 600 troops have been killed, 3,000 have been wounded, and $60 billion has been spent. The recently released White House interim report shows there to have been unsatisfactory progress by the Iraqi government in meeting many of the benchmarks laid out by President Bush back in January.

With respect to President Bush's political benchmarks, the Iraqi government has made unsatisfactory progress on all of them. What this Iraqi civil war requires is an Iraqi political compromise, but the available evidence suggests that no one within the government is willing to make the sacrifices needed to make that happen. Why should American soldiers continue to sacrifice under such circumstances? Not one more drop of American blood should be shed in pursuit of President Bush's failed Iraq policy.

The American people agree. Recent polling shows that over 60 percent of the American people now believe sending troops to Iraq was a mistake and 71 percent support withdrawing our forces by April 2008, just as H.R. 2956 would require.

Despite the views of the American public and the clear evidence on the ground that our continued military presence in Iraq is not the solution, President Bush stubbornly refuses to change course and bring our troops home. Congress has the power and obligation to do what is right and force a new policy. Passing H.R. 2956 is the first step on that road, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this reasoned legislation.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill to begin a responsible redeployment of our forces now in Iraq. The defense of our homeland is paramount and we are vulnerable for an attack. The war in Iraq has damaged the readiness of our military. Our ability to defend our Nation is at stake.

Today's report on benchmarks is further evidence that this Administration can only see the situation in Iraq through rose-colored glasses. It's time for serious policy makers—for American patriots—to find a way out of Iraq so we can focus on defending our Nation against al Qaeda, as well as other threats to national security.

This administration has no plan to defend the United States, and they did great damage to the defense of this country with the ''catch and release'' operation they had on our southern border. ''Catch and release'' sent all non-Mexicans who came in illegally to the interior of the Nation with a paper compelling them to return for deportation.

By virtue of ''catch and release'' we face the prospect of possibly hundreds of cells already in country awaiting an attack order.

What happens if al Qaeda attacks a nuclear facility? Do we have a plan for that? Who moves into defensive and containment posture? Do we even have the troops presently in country to provide that defense and containment?

What happens if there is an attack on a military base? There will be military officials nearby, but how will they respond?

What happens if there is a bio-chemical attack in an American city? Who responds—and how will our citizens be protected?

A shoulder launched weapon from a building top in New York, Washington DC, or another major American city would be devastating . . . and show our lack of preparation 6 years after 9/11 when many of us ran from these buildings, not sure we would ever see them again.

Today's report about the resurgence of al Qaeda is no surprise for us. Ever since Congress was deliberately misled by the President into authorizing the Iraq war in 2002, the war in Iraq sucked precious resources away from our focus on al Qaeda. When we invaded Iraq in 2003, the Iraq al Qaeda presence was in a single village in Kurdistan along the Iranian border. Today, it is impossible to estimate the number of al Qaeda fighters we have drawn to Iraq through our invasion.

We inadvertently aided al Qaeda through our invasion of Iraq by giving al Qaeda a recruitment opportunity for radical Muslims throughout the Middle East; giving al Qaeda the means to perfect urban warfare; tying down our military in Iraq, giving al Qaeda space to grow and operate, and most urgently, deeply damaging the readiness of the U.S. military and making the U.S. less safe for ourselves and our children.

At least one branch of this government must begin the painfil process of finding an ending to our involvement in a civil war we facilitated.

Many colleagues here seem to believe our withdrawal will leave behing an even bloodier civil war. I agree; but that will be the case whenever we leave there . . . be it today, tomorrow, next year, or a decade from now. The only difference we can make in that regard is how many American souls will die on the Iraqi battlefield between now and the day our forces withdraw.

Others have pinned all hope on the fledgling Iraqi government seated on March 16, 2005 . . . a government that has been unable to elect a Speaker for their Parliament and rarely produces a quorum. We have lost 1,282 American soldiers during the same time.

Bear in mind, al Qaeda is not the only threat we face in the future . . . North Korea, the militarization of South America . . . and many other threats are a reality for this nation in the decade to come. We must be prepared for all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the adoption of this bill.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

It is long past time that the disaster in Iraq is brought to an end.

The President's failed policy in Iraq has been repudiated by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, his inability to extricate the United States from a quagmire in the desert has been rejected by the voters, and we must change course. The President has proven himself to be either blind to the reality on the ground in Iraq or simply uncaring of what that reality means for the stability of the Middle East and the security of the United States of America.

The President took this country to war on false premises. There were no weapons of mass destruction, there was no imminent threat, there were no operational ties to al-Qaeda. And the administration knew, because we had U.N. weapons inspectors on the ground in Iraq for months before the invasion, that the so-called ''intelligence'' pointing to an active and dangerous Iraqi WMD program was simply wrong. Over and over again, Hans Blix and his teams of inspectors would launch surprise visits on sites that the CIA had pointed them to, and over and over again the U.S. intelligence would be proved incorrect.

We have been fighting in Iraq longer than we fought in the Second World War. Within a few months, we will have spent more money in Iraq than we did in the more than 10 years we were in Vietnam. And while a very small segment of our citizenry is being asked to make the ultimate sacrifice for this adventure by sending their loved ones to war, the Bush administration has given billions of dollars in tax breaks to the richest Americans. If this war were truly a national struggle, underpinned by the faith and support of the public, the sacrifices would be shared by all instead of borne by the few.

Since President Bush infamously declared ''Mission Accomplished'' over 4 years ago, the situation has only gotten worse and worse. The administration never had a plan to win the peace, and still does not, and as a result the peace cannot be won. Our brave men and women in uniform are caught in the midst of a multifaceted civil war which can only be brought to an end with political reconciliation, not military engagement.

Unfortunately, the President stubbornly refuses to understand the nature of the conflict into which he has dragged us. He refuses to change course, but more of the same cannot any longer be an option. We must extricate ourselves from a sectarian civil war which is bleeding our military every single day. This bill will begin the responsible redeployment of US forces out of Iraq within 120 days, and complete that deployment by April 1, 2008. On that date, we will have been in Iraq for more than 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Chairman SKELTON for bringing this resolution before us and I urge its adoption.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the rule and urge my colleagues to support the bill.

It has become painfully obvious that the White House is incapable of changing course in Iraq. The Bush administration's talking points about the situation in Iraq change from week to week, but the fundamental strategy remains the same. The President is determined that our troops will remain in Iraq no matter what.

The latest White House talking points are aimed at getting the American people to believe that the surge in Iraq just began a couple weeks ago, instead of 6 months ago. In fact, the President announced the surge back on January 10, and the troop escalation began in early February.

The White House is emphasizing today that it finds that Iraq is making ''satisfactory'' progress in some areas, such as the cooperation between U.S. forces and tribal sheiks in Anbar province as well as the formation of a Constitutional Review Committee, although the constitutional review itself is not complete. The reality is that the Iraqi Government has not approved a law to share Iraq's oil wealth. It has not enacted legislation to reform the De-Ba'athification laws. It has not disarmed the militias. It has not made progress on ensuring that Iraqi Security Forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law. It has not made progress toward increasing the number of Iraqi Security Forces units capable of operating independently. It has not made satisfactory progress toward establishing a date for provincial elections.

In the past 6 months, nearly 600 of our troops have died. More than 13,000 Iraqis have died. The level of violence in Iraq has not decreased. The violence and attacks have

simply shifted away from places where our forces are concentrated.

Six months into the surge, there is no indication that the Iraqis are coming together to make the political decisions necessary to end the sectarian violence that is tearing their country apart. Time has shown that whatever small chance there is of the Iraqi factions coming together, it will not happen as long as the U.S. military commitment in Iraq remains open-ended. We need to change course. The bill before the House does just that. It requires the Department of Defense to begin a phased and orderly redeployment of our combat troops from Iraq starting in 120 days of enactment, with the troop reduction to be complete by April 1, 2008. No other way has worked to convince the Iraqis that they need to step up and reach a political settlement to end the sectarian violence.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I commend my good friend and colleague, Armed Services Chairman IKE SKELTON, for authoring H.R. 2956, the ''Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.'' the Democratic Congress has drawn a line in the sand with this bill. It requires accountability from the Administration that the American people demand and deserve: stop the open-ended commitment in Iraq; stop the surge; and, stop sending our brave men and women in uniform to fight a ''winnable'' war. We have given this Administration enough time, enough U.S. blood, and too much hard-earned American dollars.

Let's call this war what it is—a civil war.

The solution for Iraq is not military. The solution for Iraq is political and diplomatic. We must once again engage our allies and Iraq's neighbors to renew a quest for a peaceful solution in Iraq. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2956. Support our valiant troops by voting to bring them home. Now.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, in January, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki publicly committed to meeting a set of benchmarks, including quelling sectarian violence, disarming sectarian militias and developing a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

In May, Congress, in a bipartisan way, made clear that the Iraqi government should be held accountable for meeting those benchmarks and required the President to report on the Iraqi Government's progress in meeting those goals.

That report, which was released today, demonstrates the President's surge is failing and that the Iraqi Government is failing to meet the benchmarks it agreed to meet 7 months ago.

The Iraqi Government has not moved toward national reconciliation. This morning, we learned that Director of Central Intelligence General Michael Hayden, an accomplished four-star general, told the bipartisan Iraq Study Group 8 months ago that Iraq's leaders are ''unable to govern.''

Now, the inability of the Iraqi Government to govern seems irreversible. If there is no functioning government in Iraq, how do we expect to fix the problems in that country militarily?

We continue to see the serious consequences that result from that inability to govern. Sectarian violence has not been quelled; it continues to escalate. Sectarian militias have not been disarmed; they continue to wreak havoc. There has been no progress on a plan to share oil revenues equitably among all Iraqis.

The situation is rapidly deteriorating and American troops are caught in the crossfire.

Continued U.S. involvement in Iraq must be contingent on the Iraqi Government keeping its word. Benchmarks without accountability are not benchmarks at all. They are blank checks. And I refuse to allow the Iraqi Government, or any government, to have a blank check on American lives.

The time has come to redeploy American troops from Iraq and reduce the U.S. military role in Iraq. We must do so in a responsible way that will help us better meet our strategic objectives and renew our fight against global terrorism.

I am convinced that this course, combined with stepping up our diplomatic efforts, provide the best opportunity to achieve our strategic objectives, reduce sectarian violence and force Iraq's leaders to get serious about Iraqi reconciliation and stabilization efforts.

As their failure to meet the benchmarks clearly illustrates, Iraq's leaders are unwilling and incapable of moving toward national reconciliation. If the United States allows the Iraqi government to have an open-ended timetable to meet these benchmarks, and demands no accountability, our troops may literally be in harm's way forever. We cannot continue to allow the safety of our troops to be placed in the hands of Iraqi leaders who have failed to keep their word or are incapable of meeting their obligations.

Make no mistake: the deteriorating situation in Iraq is not a result of military failure. Our nation's armed forces crushed Saddam Hussein's regime in one of the most complete and impressive military victories in the history of our country.

The disaster in Iraq is a result of the Bush Administration's failure to plan and failure to listen. It is a result of misplaced trust in the Malaki government. It is a result of mismanagement and incompetence.

Even worse, the administration's failed policy in Iraq has limited the success of our mission in Afghanistan, and hindered our ability to destroy al Qaeda's international operations. As a result, U.S. intelligence analysts say al Qaeda is the strongest it has ever been since the September 11, 2001, attacks. We must renew our commitment to leading the fight against global terrorism and destroying al Qaeda.

Our Nation is at a critical crossroad in Iraq, and Congress has a difficult choice to make. But one thing is clear: staying the course is not an option. We can ill afford to continue down the same course of failure that has undermined our mission in Iraq, and undermined our ability to protect our Nation from terrorist threats.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill. If enacted, this act would compel the President to begin redeploying our troops from Iraq not later than 120 days after it becomes law. It creates the appropriate framework and mechanisms for ensuring an orderly withdrawal of our forces, and it puts the responsibility for Iraq's security where it belongs—on the Iraqis.

But once again, the President has declared—long before this bill was brought to the House floor—that he would veto it or any other measure that attempted to correct his failed policy in Iraq. He has become intransigent and disconnected from the reality on the ground in Iraq, and indifferent to the will of the American people.

The President's much-vaunted ''surge'' has been underway for 6 months now, and the results are obvious: Iraq is no less violent and chaotic than before the ''surge'' began. Indeed, American casualties—both killed and wounded—have been on the rise for nearly a year, long before the surge started. By pouring more troops into Iraq, the President has simply given the insurgents more targets to shoot at.

Perhaps, even worse, he is ruining our ability to work with other countries to foster peace in the Middle East, and he is fanning the flames of a conflagration that is now likely to engulf other countries around Iraq.

The President's refusal to change course in Iraq is an enormous injustice to the brave Americans he has put in harm's way. Our troops accomplished the goal of removing Saddam Hussein from power more than 4 years ago. They accomplished the mission that they were given—and then were given another mission for which they were not provided the proper equipment and resources: being forced to act as referees in Iraq's growing civil war. Our troops deserve better.

Moreover, the President and his advisors have continued their well-established pattern of moving the goal post on his Iraq policy. Every year, the Congress has been told that Iraq's security forces would be ready to assume responsibility for their country's security in 12 to 18 months. And every time we reached that 12 to 18 month benchmark, the Administration would reset the goal post another 12 to 18 months down the road. The American people have had enough of this bait-and-switch game. Iraqis must accept responsibility for their country's future.

Indeed, the President's troop increase has played into the hands of Iraq's current government, which continues to claim that the additional American forces are needed to quell the violence—without mentioning that it is Prime Minister Maliki's own policies that are helping to fuel that violence. Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to purge his security forces of militias and sectarian death squads is a prime reason why Sunni insurgents continue their attacks against Iraq's security forces. Prime Minister Maliki's refusal to compromise on the distribution of power and oil revenue among Iraqis is why the insurgency has only gained in intensity over the past year. How long will we continue to provide military and financial support to his corrupt and ineffectual government? How much longer should our brave fighting men and women serve as referees in the middle of a spreading civil war?

If passed, this bill would compel Iraq's leaders to face the fact that we will not continue to indefinitely provide for their country's security with the lives of America's military men and women, and that they must take the necessary political steps needed to end the violence. It is for all of these reasons that I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of ending the War in Iraq.

Last November, the American people demanded a new direction for Iraq. Today, the new Democratic Congress is taking a concrete step toward bringing our troops home.

The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act sends a loud and clear message to President Bush. It requires the President to begin withdrawing American forces in the next 120

days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

This legislation is an important and historic step forward, but it does not go far enough. I support the immediate withdrawal of all American troops.

Not next year. Not next month. Today.

I oppose additional funding for the war because the situation in Iraq isn't getting better, it's getting worse. Since Bush announced his intent to escalate the war and deploy an additional 20,000 American troops, 600 have been killed and more than 3,000 have been wounded.

And for what? The administration just acknowledged in a congressionally mandated report that since the ''surge,'' there has been little to no progress on a host of political, security and economic benchmarks proposed by the President himself.

In total, the war has taken the lives of more than 3,600 American service men and women and injured more than 26,000. Countless innocent Iraqis have been killed or maimed.

This loss of life is obscene and must stop.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 2956 and commit to withholding additional money for Iraq when Congress debates the next war funding bill in September.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker just a little over a week ago I traveled to Fort Bragg in North Carolina to see yet another 100 men and women of the Virgin Islands National Guard off to Iraq.

Among those who left on Sunday and are now deployed, there are several who are doing their second tour as well as a father and his daughter.

It was not easy, but I put my best face forward while there because I knew that it was much harder—extremely difficult—for their families.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I could smile and be upbeat in my message to them is because I knew Democrats would be here today, passing this measure to set a time limit for our troops to be deployed in Iraq and to begin their return home.

And so Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this resolution as the first step to ending U.S. involvement in the civil war that Iraq has become. And I will be here in full support on the efforts that will follow to close Guantanamo and to ensure that the White House responds in a timely and appropriate manner to what they are being directed to do in H.R. 2956 today.

And I hope we will insist that he does so long before January 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to once again applaud your leadership and that of Chairman IKE SKELTON.

Because of H.R. 2956, ''The Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act'', and the measures that will follow, I am confident we will see a day, in the not too distant future, when no other American or son or daughter of our allies will die for a war we cannot justify.

Ms. KILPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, the Greek historian Herodotus is often called the ''father of history.'' In his work, The Histories, he attempted to chronicle the origin and outcome of the Greco-Persian War so that future generations could learn from experience. Unfortunately, for the men and women in Iraq and their families and for the American people, President Bush refuses to use what we have learned to revise our strategy for Iraq, redeploy our troops, and refocus on the priorities and protection of America's families.

The President continues to insist that America's involvement in the war in Iraq is an integral part of the war on terrorism. The Iraq Study Group, among other objective observers, repeatedly refuted this statement. Perhaps worse than this statement is that, despite the President's claims, the evidence indicates that progress is not being made in Iraq:

America's families unjustly continue to bear the burden of war; they have paid the price with the loss of 3,600 lives and with injuries to 26,000 service men and women. The order of nature has been violated—fathers and mothers are burying their sons and daughters. How many more of our loved ones will pay the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom of others?

America's families have paid more than $450 billion in taxes that have been use to fund failure instead of our future. We build stronger families and a stronger America when we provide our citizens with access to quality education, affordable housing and healthcare, well-paying jobs, and financial security. How much more will we spend before we realize that the very foundation of our future has crumbled beneath our feet?

The Iraqi Government has failed to meet critical benchmarks endorsed by the President in January. The President has said, ''when they stand up, we'll stand down.'' The Iraqis have not amended their Constitution, passed an equitable oil sharing law, reformed laws to provide government jobs to former members of the Ba'ath Party, or held provincial elections. When are the Iraqis going to stand up?

Seventy percent of Americans support withdrawing almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 2008; half do not believe that the increase in U.S. forces since January of this year has made a difference. In addition, several Republicans have joined Democrats in calling for a new direction in Iraq. However, the President continues to wage a war with complete disregard for the concerns of the American people and the counsel of military leaders. When will the President connect the dots and see that the picture he has drawn is not a pretty one?

The Iraq Study Group stated that the use of the military in Iraq has passed; it is time for diplomacy to take place. Regrettably, diplomacy has not been seriously considered by the President, and internecine warfare and outright civil war has filled the vacuum of this viable option in Iraq. Also, the refugee problem in Iraq has worsened the situation in the Middle East; to date, the United States has taken in less than 200 refugees from Iraq after promising to take in thousands. Why haven't we taken in more refugees or fully allowed diplomacy to bear fruit?

These are among the many reasons why I support H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act. I have opposed this war from the beginning and have been engaged in a continuing fight to change course. While our troops have performed heroically, violence remains high, and we must remove them from harm's way; we must require Iraqis to take responsibility for their own fate, and we must refocus on investing in America's families. This legislation—which is consistent with the advice of military and foreign policy experts, ensures the safety of our men and women in uniform, addresses our commitment to fighting terrorism, and reflects the will of the American people—allows us to do just that. This bill:

Acknowledges that our military has accomplished the mission they were given in the original 2002 authorization to use force and that Iraq is now responsible for its own future.

Requires American forces to begin redeploying within 120 days and to complete the transition to a limited presence by April 1, 2008.

Reiterates that the redeployment must be done in a safe and orderly way, with maximum attention paid to the protection of American forces.

Requires a comprehensive strategy by January 1, 2008, for U.S. policy in Iraq, including a discussion of American national security interests in Iraq and the broader region, the specific missions remaining forces would undertake, and minimum force levels required to accomplish them.

Names specific missions that the President must consider, but it does not require or authorize those missions.

Requires the President to submit updates on the use of and need for any forces remaining in Iraq every 90 days starting on July 1, 2008.

Dag Hammarskjold, a Swedish statesman and United Nations official, once said, ''There is a point at which everything becomes simple and there is no longer any question of choice, because all you have staked will be lost if you look back. This is life's point of no return.'' Certainly, the President and administration have reached that point. For them, the decision to stay the course is simple because it is too difficult to admit failure. However, as the representative for 670,000 of God's best in Michigan's 13th Congressional District, I am willing to make the hard choices. I believe the majority of my colleagues are, too.

The President can no longer afford to let his pride get in the way of making the right decision. Our troops, our families, our international reputation, and our future are at stake.

In the Bible, we read in Chronicles 7:14 that ''If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves . . . and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and . . . will heal their land.'' The international community—the billions of us who inhabit our home of planet earth—are children of God. We must learn to walk in the light and in love. It is out of my love of God, my love of the Constitution, my love of this country, and my love of my constituents, that I ask my colleagues to join me in support of the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

Ms. LINDA T. SAENCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, today we take a firm stand against the President's tragic war policy in Iraq. Today we vote on H.R. 2956—the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act.

This legislation is another appeal to a tone-deaf administration that our current path in Iraq is failing. The American people have had enough. They have had enough of the needless bloodshed; they've had enough of the misleading explanations; they've had enough of the broken promises; they've had enough of the lack of vision from this President.

The President's policy is based on false pretenses, for which there are now only imperfect options. After losing more than 3,500 of our servicemembers, and spending close to half a trillion dollars, it is time to bring our troops home. I salute the courage and professionalism of our soldiers who have served our country in Iraq. They overthrew an authoritarian regime and captured a dictator. Now it

is time for our commander-in-chief to bring them home. The ongoing instability in Iraq is a political problem that requires a political solution.

To continue to ask our service men and women to make the ultimate sacrifice for this misguided policy is simply immoral. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation because we must bring our troops home.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 533, the bill is considered read and the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MRS. WILSON OF NEW MEXICO

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. In its present form, I am.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mrs. Wilson of New Mexico moves to recommit the bill, H.R. 2956, to the Committee on Armed Services with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SEC. 1. ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE.

Section 101(f) of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801(f)) is amended to read as follows:

''(f) 'Electronic surveillance' means—

''(1) the installation or use of an electronic, mechanical, or other surveillance device for acquiring information by intentionally directing surveillance at a particular known person who is reasonably believed to be in the United States under circumstances in which that person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes; or

''(2) the intentional acquisition of the contents of any communication under circumstances in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy and a warrant would be required for law enforcement purposes, if both the sender and all intended recipients are reasonably believed to be located within the United States.''.

□ 1730

The SPEAKER pro tempore. For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I have just received the motion just a few moments ago, and I reserve a point of order against the motion now pending.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. A point of order is reserved.

Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New Mexico is recognized for 5 minutes in support of her motion.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, let me make the official point of order, if I may.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri is recognized. He has the right to insist upon the point of order.

Mr. SKELTON. I do insist on it as of this moment, Mr. Speaker.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. For what purpose does the gentlewoman from New Mexico rise?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, was I not recognized to explain my motion to recommit?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman raised a point of order, and he had a right to insist upon the point of order, which he so put to the Chair.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. May I speak on the point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. At the appropriate time.

The gentleman from Missouri.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I raise the point of order that the motion to recommit that was just handed to me moments ago, a motion to recommit with instructions, relates to electronic surveillance and is not germane to the bill in front of us, which deals with Iraq, and I claim the point of order that it is not germane and should be stricken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does any other Member wish to be heard on the point of order?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I wish to be heard on the point of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New Mexico is recognized.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This motion to recommit would do one very simple and vital thing that is critical to the security of this country, more critical than the underlying resolution itself, and I am begging you and pleading with you to take up this issue.

The motion to recommit would do a very simple thing. It would say that the United States can listen to phone conversations of terrorists overseas without a warrant. Why does that matter? It matters because intelligence is the first line of defense in the war on terror, and we are now knowingly operating with our fingers in our ears and our hands over our eyes.

Recent testimony in front of this Congress by Director McConnell——

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

The gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. The gentlelady is not addressing the point of order. She's giving a closing argument. I urge the Chair to rule that she must confine her remarks to the point of order that I have raised.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is correct.

The Chair reminds the gentlewoman that debate on the point of order must address the point of order and only the point of order.

The gentlewoman from New Mexico.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am addressing the point of order and why it is germane, and I think that that's important for this House to understand, and I will continue with my explanation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman may continue provided the remarks are confined to the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. My remarks will be confined to the importance of the point of order and its germaneness.

Director of National Intelligence McConnell recently said in testimony to this House that we are actually missing a significant portion of what we should be getting. That is true not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but for the war on terror in its whole.

This is critical to the security of this country.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. I urge the Speaker to have the lady confine her remarks to the point of order that is pending before the House.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from New Mexico is once again reminded that the remarks on the point of order must be confined to the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is what I am attempting to do.

The question in the point of order has to do with germaneness and the relevance of my motion to recommit to the underlying bill with respect to the Iraq resolution. That is what I'm trying to explain to the House. If my colleague from Missouri would give me a little latitude, I will continue to explain.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri is right. The gentlewoman's remarks are not confined to the point of order at issue before this House.

The gentlewoman may address the point of order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have a responsibility in this House to do things that matter, the things that are in our lap and our responsibility. There is something squarely in the lap of this House, and it

is our responsibility to deal with the national security matters at hand.

We all remember where we were on the morning of 9/11 and what we were doing, who we were with.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman will suspend.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Missouri rise?

Mr. SKELTON. I, again, urge the Chair to request the gentlelady to address the point of order, that this is not germane to the bill regarding Iraq that is before us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's point is taken.

The gentlewoman is once again advised that the remarks on the point of order must confine themselves closely to the point of order. If not, the Chair will recognize other Members to speak on a point of order. If no others seek recognition, the Chair will rule.

Does the gentlewoman from New Mexico wish to proceed?

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would wish to proceed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman is recognized.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. The question of germaneness is very important here. The reality is that this underlying bill deals with an issue of national security vital to this country, and the most important vital issue that this body must deal with today is to make sure we have the ability to listen to our enemies. That is the first line of defense in the war on terror, and that is what we are willfully ignoring.

I would urge my colleagues to vote for the motion to recommit, and if this point of order is sustained, I would ask my colleagues to vote to challenge the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request a ruling on my point of order on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does any Member wish to speak on the point of order? If no other Member wishes to address the point of order, the Chair is prepared to rule.

The gentleman makes a point of order that the instructions contained in the motion to recommit offered by the gentlewoman from New Mexico are not germane.

Clause 7 of rule XVI, the germaneness rule, provides that no proposition on a ''subject different from that under consideration shall be admitted under color of amendment.''

One of the central tenets of the germaneness rule is that an amendment should be within the jurisdiction of the committees whose jurisdiction is reflected in the bill.

The bill, H.R. 2956, was referred to the Committees on Armed Services and Foreign Affairs.

The instructions in the motion to recommit offered by the gentlewoman from New Mexico address the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, a law within the jurisdictions of the Committee on the Judiciary and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Because they address a matter outside the jurisdictions broached by the bill, the instructions in the motion to recommit are not germane.

The point of order is sustained. The motion is not in order.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I move to appeal the ruling of the Chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is, shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the House?

MOTION TO TABLE OFFERED BY MR. SKELTON

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to table the motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to table.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to lay the appeal on the table will be followed by a 5-minute vote on the question of passage, if arising without further debate or proceedings in recommittal.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 224, nays 197, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 623]

YEAS—224

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gilchrest
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—10

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis (IL)
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Lowey
Paul
Tancredo
Young (AK)

□ 1803

Messrs. TURNER, TOM DAVIS of Virginia, SHUSTER, Mrs. MYRICK, and Mr. TERRY changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, and Messrs. ISRAEL, DINGELL, RUSH, and GORDON of Tennessee changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to table was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 223, nays 201, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 624]

YEAS—223

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Duncan
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NAYS—201

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Ehlers
Ellsworth
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastert
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Holden
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Snyder
Souder
Stearns
Sullivan
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—8

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Jindal
Paul
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that 2 minutes remain in this vote.

□ 1813

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEINER) laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on the Budget:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Speaker NANCY PELOSI,
Office of the Speaker,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: I am writing to officially announce my resignation on this date, Thursday, July 12, 2007, from the House Committee on the Budget, where it has been a true honor to serve.

If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to call me.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

BETTY SUTTON,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.

There was no objection.

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Democratic Caucus, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 540) and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 540

Resolved, That the following named Member be and is hereby elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY.—Ms. Sutton (to rank immediately after Mr. Johnson of Georgia).

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1815

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1851, SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 534 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 534

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for

consideration of the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. All points of order against the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute are waived except those arising under clause 10 of rule XXI. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of H.R. 1851 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, my colleague, Mr. DIAZ-BALART. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. CASTOR. I also ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 534.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 534 provides for consideration of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, under a structured rule. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services.

The rule makes in order the Financial Services substitute as an original bill for the purpose of amendment.

The rule also makes in order six amendments printed in the Rules Committee report. Each amendment is debatable for 10 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, many American families are facing a critical housing crunch. The cost of an apartment or home is rising out of sight. But there is good news from a majority of this Congress that keeps fighting for a new direction for America. The reform provided today through H.R. 1851, under this rule, which has bipartisan support, will help families in need of affordable housing.

I would like to thank Housing and Community Development Subcommittee Chair MAXINE WATERS, and Financial Services Chair BARNEY FRANK for their leadership in housing and commitment to our Nation's families.

Our actions today are needed because, over the past few years, the Bush administration has caused great frustration when it comes to housing. The White House eliminated housing opportunities for approximately 150,000 families under a major section 8 funding formula change.

The White House refused to release about $1.4 billion in unused voucher funds for affordable housing. So, Mr. Speaker, instead of homes for many families in need, thousands of families have been placed on waiting lists.

In my hometown of Tampa, Florida, during a 1-week open enrollment session, more than 10,000 seniors, families and veterans indicated a need for housing. But, instead of receiving housing, they were placed on a waiting list. The waiting list takes up to 4 years, and is so long that the Tampa Housing Authority is unable to help others that need it.

Even with this reform bill, Mr. Speaker, the final fair market value rents are in need of adjustment. It's ridiculous and completely unreasonable for HUD to believe that a 3-bedroom apartment in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater area is available for just over $1,000. The truth is, those affordable homes and apartments are few and far between, and this must be fixed.

Nevertheless, H.R. 1851 takes positive steps to ensure that more families are able to find a clean, safe, stable and affordable place to live. Through the major reforms contained in the bill, we are going to increase the number of families that can receive housing over the next 5 years.

We will simplify the rules and procedures used to establish rents for section 8 and provide housing. We're going to reduce the bureaucracy and red tape for our public housing authorities so they can concentrate on assisting the elderly, the physically challenged and other struggling families.

We're going to provide incentives for families to become more self-sufficient by obtaining employment, increasing their incomes, pursuing higher education and planning for retirement. These families will also be able to use section 8 vouchers for a down payment on the American dream of home ownership. We will continue to fight to keep families safe and protected in an affordable, clean and safe home.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support this bill. And the Congress should be eager to pass this reform.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my friend, the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CASTOR) for the time, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, the Housing Choice Voucher Program, more commonly known as section 8, helps provide housing assistance to around 2 million low-income families and individuals each year. The program began in 1974, primarily as a project-based rental assistance program. By the next decade, it had become evident that the project-based model was too costly and concentrated families in high poverty areas, thereby making it harder to break the cycle of poverty.

In 1983, Congress stopped providing project-based section 8 contracts and created vouchers as a replacement. The voucher program allows families with a voucher to find and lease a unit in the private sector, instead of being limited to certain section 8 housing complexes. Recipients pay a portion of their rent, based on their income, while the voucher covers the remaining portion of the rent.

In 1998, the program consumed 42 percent of HUD's annual budget. By 2005, it had grown to over 62 percent of HUD's budget. If the growth in the program is not addressed and reformed, we could face a situation where deserving low-income families would be unable to receive any assistance.

The underlying bill makes a number of improvements to the section 8 program to reform and simplify regulations of local public housing agencies, while preserving essential tenant protection. H.R. 1851 aims to simplify rent calculation and inspection requirements for section 8 vouchers, project-based assistance and public housing, and to promote self sufficiency on the part of assisted families through work incentives and home ownership opportunities.

This bill can make good changes to the section 8 voucher program. The funding allocation formula included in the bill codifies the formula change made in the continuing resolution,

February 2007. It uses the public housing agencies' vouchers costs and utilization rates from the last 12 months, instead of the 2004 numbers for a quarter of that year.

Under current law, HUD is required to recapture the amount in excess of each public housing agency's reserve limits, funds that are left over after the renewal of vouchers. If the PHA does not use all the money that the government has authorized, then the government reallocates those funds to another PHA the following year.

The community that I'm honored to represent has lost millions of dollars to other public housing agencies under the change in law made by this Congress. The current funding formula neglects the coverage costs of litigation issues or weather damage, of living facilities which were financed by the excess funds.

The manager's amendment, Mr. Speaker, which will be debated later today, will allow public housing agencies to retain, to keep 12.5 percent of their reserve funds during the first year of the formula change. After the transition, PHAs will remain with 5 percent of their reserve funds in a given year. The manager's amendment aims to somewhat compensate for losses faced by public housing agencies such as those in my community.

I commend the Financial Services Committee, its chairman and ranking member, and all of its members, for working in a bipartisan manner to make improvements to the section 8 program. I look forward to the committee's continued efforts to improve the program, and to addressing the concerns I have mentioned with the funding formula.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the bipartisan nature with which and under which the Financial Services Committee has worked this bill, the majority in the Rules Committee failed to live up to that same standard. There were 23 amendments submitted to the Rules Committee for consideration. The majority on the Rules Committee made only six amendments in order. Yes, half of them, a whopping three, were Republican amendments, but there were 12 Republican amendments that had been submitted.

During consideration of this rule, the minority made attempts to make several other Republican amendments in order, but the majority blocked each amendment by party line vote. That's quite a contrast to how the Financial Services Committee has worked.

My colleague on the Rules Committee from Texas, Mr. SESSIONS, also offered an amendment to the rule that would have made this an open rule, Mr. Speaker. The majority on the Rules Committee blocked our efforts for an open rule. This is contrary to how the majority promised to run the House of Representatives, and it is most unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished chair of the Financial Services Committee, Mr. FRANK.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman. I thank my colleague from Florida for the generous words about the procedure. There were some differences between us on the parties on this, but in general, this represents a consensus.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to give credit where credit is due. This is a result of a process that was begun by our former colleague from Ohio, Mr. NEY.

□ 1830

He convened when he was Chair of the Housing Subcommittee a set of roundtable discussions with participation from HUD, from tenant groups, from landlord groups that participate, and from others. And much of what is in this bill came out of the sessions that he and his then ranking member, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), now the Chair of the subcommittee, did.

So as is always the case in a parliamentary body, we will, as is appropriate, focus to some extent on some differences. And there are several amendments that will present sharp differences, but people ought to keep in mind that it is in the context of a great deal of agreement.

In addition to the agreements already there, I have had conversations with several of the Republican Members, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER); the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL); the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT). We have some agreements about what we should be doing, how this should be interpreted, what we should be doing going further, and I look forward in the general debate to colloquies with all of them so that I think we can further solidify the agreements that we have going forward.

Now, as to the substance of the bill, the section 8 program is a very important one. Many of us believe that the problem has been not with the section 8 program but that it stood alone, that it was not accompanied by programs that would build housing. And in other pieces of legislation that have come out of the Financial Services Committee, some of which have come to the floor, some of which are about to come to the floor, we are going to try to add a supply side, if I may borrow the phrase, to the demand side.

We have a program here which increases the demand for housing by putting money in the hands of people who otherwise would not be able to afford decent housing. But if all you do is that and you don't also help build housing, you can have an adverse impact on price. So we hope to be able to balance it, but that is not the fault of this program.

What this bill does is to make it more flexible. It has much in there that HUD agrees with; although, again, I don't claim that everybody agrees with everything. An indication of the extent to which this simply improves the program, I will include in the RECORD several letters on this subject. One letter comes from those who are the landlords, who rent.

And, by the way, we are not automatically doing them a favor. In a tight rental market, as we have in many parts of this country, it is a good thing for the public purpose that landlords are willing to participate. Many of these landlords, they don't have to be in the section 8 program, so we try to reach out to them. And here is a letter endorsing the bill from the Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, the Institute of Real Estate Management, the National Affordable Housing Management Association, the National Apartment Association, the National Association of Home Builders, the National Leased Housing Association, and the National Multi Housing Council.

We also have strong support from those in the public sector at the local level who administer this: the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and the Council of Large Public Housing Agencies. And then we have also a letter from a large coalition of advocacy groups, of religious groups that are in the business of building the housing. There is a very broad degree of support for this bill.

I understand there are a couple of points of difference, and I realize, too, there are some points of difference that couldn't have been presented. I would have liked them to be. But I think that the three amendments that are in order on the Republican side do present some of the most important differences.

I should note, by the way, that while three amendments reflect the disagreement that many in the minority have with the bill, two of the other amendments are really bipartisan. The manager's amendment is an amendment in which the gentleman from Illinois and the gentlewoman from California collaborated.

So the manager's amendment, one of the six amendments, it is designated as the Waters amendment, but it is very bipartisan. And the second one that is bipartisan is an amendment that deals with situations that threaten the ability of people to stay in affordable housing in the district my colleague from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and our colleague from the committee from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE).

So we have two amendments which are completely bipartisan. We have those three. And then the one that the gentlewoman from New York will offer on domestic violence, which I don't think is terribly controversial.

So I understand that we haven't resolved all the differences. I do think that, and let me put it this way, of all the housing bills that have come to the floor from this committee, this is the

least controversial. I don't want anyone to get bored. When we come back in early September, we can fight again. But I do think on this one, while there will be some disagreements, what we reflect is a basic consensus on how to improve an important social program that, as I said, began under Republican leadership in the last Congress and we have largely continued the process.

I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

JULY 12, 2007.

DEAR CHAIRMAN FRANK AND RANKING MEMBER BACHUS: We are writing to lend our strong support for H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA), which is scheduled to be debated in the House today. We represent a diverse array of constituencies—ranging from housing providers to tenants to apartment owners to membership organizations to religious leaders—who all agree that this is a very strong piece of legislation.

Simply put, SEVRA is a good government bill. It stabilizes the voucher program with a permanent funding policy, while simplifying the rules about how to calculate tenant rents and streamlining the housing inspection process. As a result, the voucher program will run more efficiently, tenants will be rewarded when they increase their work effort, and there will be less unnecessary paperwork for all parties involved—housing authorities, tenants, and property owners.

The voucher program is our nation's leading source of housing assistance for low-income people. It serves nearly two million families with children, elderly people, and people with disabilities. Making sure that it operates as effectively as possible is in their interest as well as in our national interest.

We give this bill our strong endorsement so it can continue through the legislative process and be enacted this year.

Sincerely,

AARP, American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA), American Network of Community Options and Resources, Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies (AJFCA), The Arc of the United States, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), Coalition on Human Needs (CRN), Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), Easter Seals.

Enterprise Community Partners, Housing Assistance Council (HAC), Institute of Real Estate Management, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Lutheran Services in America, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA).

National AIDS Housing Coalition, National Alliance of HUD Tenants, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Apartment Association, National Association of Home Builders, National Association of Housing Co-ops, National Association of Realtors, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development.

National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA), National Housing Conference, National Housing Trust, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, National Leased Housing Association, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Multi Housing Council, National People's Action (NPA), National Training and Information Center (NTIC), NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby.

Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC), Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office, Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA), Public Justice Center, The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society, Travelers Aid International, United Cerebral Palsy, United Jewish Communities (UJC).

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS,
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. SPENCER BACHUS,
Ranking Member, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT,
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, House Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN FRANK AND RANKING MEMBER BACHUS: On behalf of the board and members of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), I am writing in regard to your consideration of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). As passed by the House Financial Services Committee and improved by the proposed Managers' Amendment, NAHRO supports the passage of H.R. 1851.

NAHRO applauds the co-sponsors of H.R. 1851 and the Financial Services Committee as a whole for bringing this important and necessary piece of legislation to the floor for consideration by the full House of Representatives. We also applaud the bipartisan spirit with which this bill has been developed over many months of informed and responsible debate. The provisions now embedded in SEVRA, as passed by the Committee and improved by the Managers' Amendment, will enhance and strengthen the quality and administration of the Section 8 voucher program in responsible and tangible ways.

Most importantly, SEVRA stabilizes the Section 8 voucher program, the administration of which, starting in 2004 under HUD's PIH Notice 2004–7, has been negatively impacted by virtue of a funding distribution formula that has taken appropriated dollars and dispersed them across diverse housing markets without regard to the number of families leased or current voucher costs in each community. The budget-based/block grant-oriented voucher distribution formula in place from FY 2004–FY 2006 has funded some communities over their authorized voucher level, while dramatically underfunding others. As a direct result of this voucher funding formula, at least 150,000 authorized vouchers have been lost nationwide to low-income households who could have otherwise leased or purchased housing under the program. The funding formula in H.R. 1851, which builds on the prior calendar year funding formula enacted in the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution (PL. 110–5), further corrects this situation and, more significantly, will over time help restore nationwide leasing levels to their historic high pre-FY 2004 thresholds.

There are several additional items included in H.R. 1851 that represent important and positive steps forward in the administration of the Section 8 voucher program. These include:

HAP Funding Policies: In order to adjust to the change in funding formula as noted above, SEVRA contains provisions that create an important transitional mechanism. The bill's transitional mechanism would allow public housing agencies, for a period of time and subject to certain limits, to retain and use their unobligated fund balances. This is particularly important in light of HUD's delayed implementation of agencies' FY 2007 funding amounts.

Administrative Fees: We support the restoration of the post-QHWRA administrative fee structure and rates with improved inflation factors, special fees, fees for each issued voucher, and equitable fees under the Project-Based Voucher (PBV) assistance program for agency-owned units.

Annual Leasing: NAHRO supports the provision in SEVRA that will enable agencies to serve additional families with available funds, while still maintaining the voucher program's overall connection to authorized vouchers.

Housing Quality Inspections of Dwelling Units: NAHRO supports the provision in SEVRA that will allow housing agencies, at their discretion, to complete annual inspections of all their voucher assisted units every two years. This provision will reaffirm the discretionary authority of a local housing agency to perform annual inspections on a geographic basis rather than tying inspections to each household's lease anniversary. We also support the provision allowing housing agencies, at their discretion, to approve a dwelling unit in lieu of its own Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection when a comparable inspection is performed by other governmental entities. Finally, we support allowing housing agencies, at their discretion, to enable eligible voucher households to move into a unit and tender an initial subsidy payment, so long as an HQS inspection does not reveal that health or safety violations are present and repairs are made within 30 days.

In sum, H.R. 1851 improves important elements of both the Section 8 voucher and public housing programs. We again congratulate you on the steps you have taken thus far and look forward to continuing to work with you and your Senate colleagues to develop and pass a pragmatic and necessary piece of legislation that encourages the highest and best use of precious federal funds to help meet the well-documented need for decent, safe and affordable housing in our communities.

Sincerely,

SAUL N. RAMIREZ, Jr.

COUNCIL OF LARGE PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES,
Washington, DC, July 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS,
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. SPENCER BACHUS,

Ranking Member, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. JUDY BIGGERT, Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: On behalf of the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), I am writing in support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA).

SEVRA makes significant changes to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and marks a significant step forward in simplifying the administration and funding of the program. Under your leadership, Congress has taken the initiative to reform this much needed program which provides housing assistance to two million of the lowest-income families. In addition to other changes important to CLPHA, SEVRA improves the current voucher funding formula, provides for rent simplification and flexibility, clarifies program eligibility, simplifies inspection requirements, and authorizes a funding reserve.

SEVRA is also critically important to CLPHA members and other public housing authorities across the nation for the expansion and far-reaching changes to the Housing Innovation Program (HIP), renamed from Moving to Work. We appreciate Congress making this program more broadly available to the many housing authorities interested in participating in the program.

While SEVRA is not perfect, the underlying bill is sound and we are pleased to offer our support. Again, we thank you for undertaking this initiative, and we look forward to working with you as the legislation continues to evolve and as it moves forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,

SUNIA ZATERMAN,
Executive Director.

JULY 12, 2007.

Hon. BARNEY FRANK,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FRANK: We are writing to encourage your support of H.R. 1851 when it goes to the floor. The ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007'' provides important changes to a program that has served as the cornerstone of federal affordable housing policy for more than 30 years.

The undersigned groups worked with the Financial Services Committee to ensure that the legislation addresses issues fundamental to the continued success of the program, including a viable funding formula and important changes to streamline program operations.

H.R. 1851 also addresses several issues that are of particular interest to our organizations:

Provides that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will be required to translate both its own official vital documents as well as selected non-HUD property documents into any language the Department identifies as necessary, and provide a HUD-funded and HUD-administered 800 number for oral interpretation needs.

Amends the inspection timeframes for apartments that will be accepting voucher holders by eliminating unnecessary delays and duplication, thereby encouraging increased apartment owner participation.

Provides important changes to the project-based voucher program to ensure its flexibility as a tool for preserving or expanding the supply of apartments affordable to low-income families in many communities, particularly those with a tight housing market.

We are not able to support the Hensarling amendment as we have not had sufficient time to review the impact of such work requirements on all affected parties and request that it be withdrawn.

H.R. 1851 is expected to be on the House floor for a vote today, July 12. We urge your support of this important housing measure.

Sincerely,

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.
Institute of Real Estate Management.
National Affordable Housing Management Association.
National Apartment Association.
National Association of Home Builders.
National Leased Housing Association.
National Multi Housing Council.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE).

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise in opposition to the rule. It is not because of the final product, but the way in which the rule actually came about.

I have worked closely with the chairman of the Financial Services Committee, and I know that he is a fair individual, and actually in committee he supported several of my amendments and gave us the opportunity to have that vote be held.

It is no secret that we have an immigration crisis facing us in America. It is also no secret that Americans are angry. Like most Members, my office was flooded when the President and the Senate attempted to ram another amnesty immigration program down our throats.

According to a recent Rasmussen poll, 56 percent of Americans surveyed support an ''enforcement only'' approach to immigration reform and 44 percent of Americans opposed the Senate's amnesty plan.

Yesterday my colleagues and I offered several amendments that would bring accountability to the section 8 housing program under HUD. Not surprisingly, the majority broke their promise of openness in the House and yet again did not allow them to be considered by Members today.

Americans work hard for their money and Americans are also very generous. We are not afraid to help fellow Americans. A roof over your head is one of the most basic human needs, and we are not afraid to spend tax dollars to help those that cannot provide for themselves. But what Americans refuse to do is give up their hard-earned tax dollars to people who sneak into our country illegally. The funds included in this bill must, let me repeat that, must only go to those who are here legally working in this country and paying taxes.

However, the amendment my friend Mr. PRICE and I introduced would have ensured just that: Those receiving funds, taxpayer funds under section 8 are here in this country legally. Our amendment would have brought commonsense accountability to a program that clearly runs short of that right now. Yet the majority won't even allow Members to consider that amendment on the floor. What are they so afraid of?

It is not even a full year into the majority's new regime, and I am already tired, and so are my constituents, of broken promises. I know Americans are also. If other Members are tired, then they should join us in voting against this rule that blocks these commonsense amendments like those of my colleagues.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio, Mrs. TUBBS JONES.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman for yielding time. I would like to thank the subcommittee Chair, MAXINE WATERS, for all her leadership and work on this; the Chair, Mr. FRANK; and my old colleague from Ohio, Bob Ney for the work.

I rise in support of H.R. 1851. In my district the problems with section 8 housing have bubbled to the surface, particularly in many of the inter-ring suburbs such as Bedford, Bedford Heights, Euclid, Cleveland Heights, and Shaker Heights. They have seen an increase in section 8 housing and are beginning to see a clash in culture between owners and renters, between those who have long time been owners and those who are new at renting property.

It is very important that when we start to look at some of the urban centers, some of the older housing, we start looking at the inter-ring suburbs with older housing, and even the newer suburban municipalities, that we have an opportunity to reform how we have section 8 housing and how it is used. The reform provisions in this bill will not only open access to low-income Americans to rent and even buy, it will provide incentives so that the program can truly serve its purpose of empowering people to become self-sufficient.

Certainly, as we have gone through this whole year or past 2 or 3 years where we have had predatory lenders preying upon our communities, we want to be able to give those new homeowners an opportunity to understand what homeownership means, to understand what kind of situation they could put themselves in without the necessary education. But as important to owning a home is the ability to have a decent job, to be well trained, to take care of your family, et cetera. And through the proposals that are set forth in this program, I believe we will have an opportunity to see that come to fruition.

This bill also includes a number of provisions designed to create other incentives.

I am so proud to have an opportunity to stand on the floor of the House saying that section 8 is going to be more than it has been in the past, that it will reach its true fruition.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes

to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Florida for his leadership on this issue and so many others.

I rise opposed to this rule for process and policy reasons.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the new majority promised us and they promised the American people a fair and open process. But again, the majority has failed to live up to its promises, and now that it is out from under the spotlight of election-year promises, we see that they are few and far between.

Before last year's election, Speaker PELOSI said, ''Because the debate has been limited and Americans' voices silenced by this restrictive rule, I urge my colleagues to vote against the rule.''

And, Mr. Speaker, I agree. So what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

In December following last year's election, the distinguished majority leader, Mr. HOYER, told the media that ''We intend to have a Rules Committee . . . that gives opposition voices and alternative proposals the ability to be heard and considered on the floor of the House.''

Mr. Speaker, where is the commitment to that promise, with only six of 23 amendments made in order? What has changed, Mr. Speaker? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Mr. Speaker, the Rules chairman, Ms. SLAUGHTER, has said, ''If we want to foster democracy in this body, we should take the time and the thoughtfulness to debate all major legislation under an open rule, not just appropriations bills . . . an open process should be the norm, not the exception.''

Mr. Speaker, what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Rules Committee member Mr. MCGOVERN has said, ''I would say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, if you want to show some bipartisanship, if you want to promote a process that has some integrity, then this should be an open rule. All Members should have an opportunity to come here and offer amendments to this bill to improve the quality of the deliberations on this House floor. They should be able to come and offer amendments to clean up this place.''

Well, Mr. Speaker, what's changed? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Democratic Caucus Chair RAHM EMANUEL has said, ''Let's have an up-and-down vote. Don't be scared. Do not hide behind some little rule. Come on out here. Put it out on the table and let's have a vote . . . So don't hide behind the rule. If this is what you want to do, let's have an up-and-down vote. You can put your votes right up there . . . and then the American people can see what it is all about.''

So what has changed, Mr. Speaker? Is it political expediency or is it a broken promise?

Mr. Speaker, I am also very curious as to what has happened with the distinguished chairman and my friend on the Financial Services Committee. In the past, not only has he been a vocal advocate for open rules to the legislation that he has brought to the floor, but the new majority has spared him no effort to applaud him for doing so. In fact, Chairman FRANK was such a firm believer in allowing debate, allowing consideration of amendments, that Representative WELCH of Vermont felt so moved to say, ''All of us applaud the work of Chairman FRANK for recommending an open rule to this bill . . . ''

But, Mr. Speaker, that was on a previous bill. So I would ask what's changed. What is the chairman afraid of? Because it certainly appears that he has lost his passion for an open and a fair process.

In a letter dated July 9, 2007, to the Chair of the House Committee on Rules, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Chairman FRANK urged that the Rules Committee ''provide a structured amendment process.'' So what's changed, Mr. Speaker? What's changed?

□ 1845

The Rules Committee Web site lists 23 amendments submitted for consideration, yet only six were made in order. So what's so scary about the other 17? What's so scary?

Mr. Speaker, I submitted three amendments not made in order by this draconian and restrictive rule. My first amendment would have applied pay-as-you-go spending rules to this bill that CBO has said will have a net cost of $2.4 billion over the next 5 years. Remember Democrats' promise to use PAYGO rules for everything; instead, they're picking and choosing when to do so. At home we call that breaking a rule and breaking a promise.

The second amendment, Mr. Speaker, is clearly a substantive one. It would have prevented, as the gentlelady from Florida said, prevented illegal immigrants from receiving assistance under the section 8 program by providing all adults to provide secure identification before receiving assistance. It's the kind of commonsense amendment that the Financial Services Committee has applied before. It has also been accepted by the full House on other legislation.

The third amendment would have helped clarify a new requirement for public housing authorities. This bill provides that the public housing authorities have to report rental payments as alternative data to the credit bureaus. Rental payment information is clearly different than other forms of commerce and may need to be treated differently in order to ensure accuracy of credit reporting.

These were three thoughtful and substantive amendments which deserved the consideration of all 435 Members of the House, but they were denied that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, by this restrictive and draconian rule.

Mr. Speaker, back home in my district, rules aren't rules if you only follow them when you want to. Democrats promised to use a fair and open process for everything. Instead, they're picking and choosing. And when you pick and choose to do so, it's called breaking a rule and breaking a promise.

So I urge the new majority to rededicate itself to its campaign promises of a fair and open process. We should allow this Chamber to work its will on all legislation. An open process shouldn't just be something that's just talked about solely on the campaign trail. What amendment was so scary that it ought not be included in this discussion?

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the rule so that we may have a complete, open and fair debate. The American people deserve and expect no less.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, the Democrats are going to keep their promise to the American people by fighting for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. I thank the gentlelady for yielding and just say this is an incredibly important bill. It will expand the number of units of affordable housing and expand the number of vouchers to over 100,000. That's extremely important to the American people.

And in response to the gentleman, if he cared so much about his amendment, he should have offered it during the committee. Chairman FRANK and Subcommittee Chairwoman WATERS held hearings and thoroughly discussed every amendment. The committee met for 2 complete days and thoroughly discussed every amendment. If the gentleman wanted and cared about his amendment, he should have put it forward before the committee.

The rule is very fair. Out of the six amendments that had have been accepted, three are Republican, one is bipartisan, and the other is a bipartisan manager's amendment. So the gentleman is not looking at what is the real issue. The real issue is providing affordable housing that is desperately needed in our country. Many families are facing the increased cost of living, and there is a lack of affordable housing. I object strenuously to the facts in the statement by my good friend on the other side of the aisle.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1853, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 (SEVRA). This bill comes before the House at a critical time.

Right now too many Americans face the double onslaught of stagnant wages and ever increasing costs of living, including a critical lack of affordable housing. That is why it is so important to send a strong message to our constituents that we support stable, safe and affordable communities.

Affordable housing is a critical component of this, and Section 8 housing vouchers provide vital rental assistance for low-income families, seniors, and the disabled. I am pleased to report that this legislation comes to the floor with

the strong bipartisan support of the Financial Services Committee which passed this bill in May by a vote of 52–9.

This bill makes a number of changes to the Section 8 voucher, project-based and public housing programs. Specifically this bill:

Makes the Voucher Funding Formula More Efficient. The bill reforms the formula used to allocate Section 8 voucher funds to housing agencies to increase the number of families receiving vouchers.

Creates 100,000 New Vouchers. We authorize 20,000 new incremental vouchers a year over each of the next 5 years.

The Bill Promotes Homeownership. By allowing families to use housing vouchers as a down-payment on a first-time home purchase.

Encourages economic self-sufficiency for low income voucher and public housing families. H.R. 1851 includes a number of provisions designed to create incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement. No longer will our voucher formula discourage and penalize a voucher holder from seeking and obtaining employment.

Protects Tenants. The bill preserves the rights of voucher families to move to other areas, it addresses excessive voucher rent burdens, provides for more accurate fair market rent calculations to protect voucher holders in units that are in need of repair.

Stronger families and communities are a key part of the Democrats' New Direction for America. This bill strongly aids this goal.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Georgia did offer this amendment in committee, and it was rejected. What he wanted was to be able to present it before the full House. And he was pointing out that the promise that had been made by the majority was that there would be more openness during the consideration of legislation such as this. And that's what the gentleman from Georgia was trying to point out.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished leader on this issue and many others, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in reluctant opposition to this rule governing the consideration of H.R. 1851.

I had hoped that the committee would see the wisdom in providing an important open rule on this important legislation; and in the absence of an open rule, that it would at least make in order those amendments that Members took the time and effort to draft. Unfortunately, of the 23 amendments filed with the Rules Committee, only six were made in order. While I'm pleased that the majority of those amendments are Republican amendments, the other Republican and Democratic amendments deserved to be debated and given a full and fair hearing.

Section 8 vouchers are tenant-based as well as project-based subsidies that low-income families use in the private market to lower their rental cost to 30 percent of their incomes. The program has grown to replace public housing as the primary tool for subsidizing the housing costs of low-income families.

Through this program, HUD provides portable subsidies to individuals, tenant-based, who are seeking rental housing from qualified and approved owners, and provide subsidies to private property owners who set aside some or all of their units for low-income families. This is project-based.

The section 8 program began in 1974 primarily as a project-based rental assistance program. However, in the mid-1980s project-based assistance came under criticism for being too costly and for concentrating poor families in high-poverty areas. Consequently, in 1983, Congress stopped providing new project-based section 8 contracts and created vouchers as a new form of assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this bill reflects a bipartisan effort led by Chairman FRANK, Chairwoman WATERS and Republican members of the committee. In fact, this bill enjoyed substantial Republican support in the Financial Services Committee. I am an original cosponsor, along with Mr. SHAYS.

During committee deliberation, we were given the opportunity to debate and consider a variety of issues pertaining to this bill. Members on our side of the aisle had hoped to be given the same opportunity to debate important issues on the House floor. For example, the amendment filed by my colleagues, Mr. PRICE, Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE, Mrs. CAPITO and Mr. CAMPBELL, requiring proper documentation when seeking section 8 Federal assistance was not made in order. This is an important amendment, and I would have hoped we would have the opportunity to debate that issue fully.

There were other amendments filed my by colleagues, Congressmen CHABOT, KING and WICKER, that I think deserve to be considered by the full House. These Members do not serve on the Financial Services Committee and should have been given the chance to offer amendments crucial to their constituents and districts.

Republicans support many aspects of H.R. 1851, but we all deserve the right to participate in the amendment process, whether as members of the committee of jurisdiction or as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Only through an open rule is that possible. For this reason, as a supporter of this legislation, I rise in reluctant opposition to the rule.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the gentlelady for yielding, and also for your leadership, and for bringing together today a very fair rule.

I rise in strong support of this rule and in strong support of this bill, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. And I want to commend, first of all, our committee chairman, Mr. FRANK, and our subcommittee chairwoman, Congresswoman WATERS, for their leadership and for their hard work in crafting this bill.

As a former member of the Financial Services Committee, actually a member of Congresswoman WATERS' Subcommittee on Housing, I had the opportunity to work with my colleagues on earlier versions of this bill, and this end product contains many important updated provisions. For example, this bill permits families to use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase. The goal of home ownership is necessary to help stabilize family units, promote gainful employment, and restore pride and dignity to many low-income families. It is the primary path to wealth accumulation in America for ordinary folks who don't have stock accounts and who can't play in the stock market and on Wall Street. It's the way to achieve the American Dream for most folks in America. And so home ownership is extremely important, and this bill offers that opportunity.

It also offers a number of changes that protect and benefit tenants. Examples include the portability provisions that preserve voucher families' ability to move to other areas as they determine. They deserve that right and should be able to do that. It provides for more accurate and fair market rent calculation. And it also protects voucher holders in units that are in need of repairs.

Section 8 housing vouchers provide the security of affordable housing to many low-income families, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others who need this type of rental assistance. This leads to stronger families and safer communities, and it does prevent homelessness.

There is a housing crisis in America. This bill is a major step forward in addressing it.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KNOLLENBERG).

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide some perspective on the effect H.R. 1851 will have on discretionary spending and on the appropriations process. If we're not careful, we will be opening the door to a huge new spending at uncontrollable rates.

The section 8 voucher program has proved widely successful and popular. But there is also wide consensus that we must provide reform to the program, which I agree with. We all want the program to be effective, provide assistance to those truly in need and be fiscally responsible for American taxpayers.

First, I want to point out, there are positive reforms in H.R. 1851. The bill increases the number of PHAs allowed

to participate in the Moving to Work Program. This program, renamed in the bill as the Housing Innovation Program, gives PHAs flexibility to design and test methods that achieve efficiency, reduce costs and promote self-sufficiency.

The bill also enhances HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency Act program which works to give low-income families the skills and experience needed to become economically independent.

I do, however, have major concerns with the provisions in H.R. 1851 that abandons the budget-based funding methodology. Going back to the flawed unit-based methodology like this bill proposes is a recipe for budgetary disaster.

A unit-based system lacks incentives for PHAs to maximize assistance to needy families within a fixed budget. A unit-based formula system that includes costs incurred as well as units put under lease simply tells PHAs to lease at whatever cost they want, even if it is more than the market rate and the market price for the same unit. We already know what that can mean. We have experience with a unit-based approach and have seen what it means.

In fiscal years 2003 and 2004, the Appropriations Committee shifted to a unit-based funding to spur leasing, and the result was skyrocketing per unit cost and total funding requirements that increased by 40 percent, from $9 billion to $13 billion, in 2 years. In 2005, a budget-based system was reinstituted.

We, as appropriators, can simply not afford to see a similar increase in the future. Today, in total, the section 8 program has grown to consume 60 percent of HUD's budget. Going back to a unit-based program will only increase that percentage. Simply put, as the Housing Voucher Program takes up more of HUD's budget, there will be less we will have for other housing programs.

As the former chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee for HUD, and as the current chairman will attest, the growing Housing Voucher Program is forcing Congress to choose between section 8 vouchers and other important HUD priorities. That includes programs that support first-time ownership, home ownership, homeless facilities, and care and housing for the elderly and the disabled.

And then there is this Community Development Block Grant, which I believe virtually every Member supports because they hear from their mayor, the city council and from the county administrators on how the program makes their community better. If we're not careful, these programs will face deep cuts in future years just to accommodate the section 8 increases.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a work in progress. It has been improved in committee, and I believe amendments before us today can improve it further. I am hopeful that as the bill works its way through into the legislative process, we can improve it even more.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the distinguished colleagues who have participated in this debate. Obviously this is a very, very important piece of legislation that is being brought forth today.

We have concerns with regard to the process, not in the creation of the legislation itself but in the way in which it has been brought forth to the floor and the rule that brings the legislation to the floor and establishes the terms of debate for the legislation.

I think it has been a good debate. I think we've been able to express certainly our concern with the process, as well as in the case of most Members that I have certainly heard on this debate, the evident awareness of the importance of the underlying legislation and the issue dealt with by the underlying legislation.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. CASTOR. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to thank, on behalf of the folks I represent back home in Florida and all Americans, express my thanks to Chairwoman Maxine Waters and to Chairman Barney Frank for standing up and fighting for America's families and affordable housing.

I urge my colleagues to continue the American tradition of promoting the American Dream and turning that dream into a reality for decent, safe, clean and affordable housing, particularly for the elderly, the disabled, veterans in our community, domestic violence victims and all families.

□ 1900

Mr. Speaker, I urge a ''yes'' vote on the previous question and on the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1851 and insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CASTOR). Pursuant to House Resolution 534 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1851.

□ 1902

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, with Mr. WEINER in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. As you know, I introduced H.R. 1851 on March 29, 2007. I want to thank each of my colleagues, both on the Committee on Financial Services and in the House, who have joined with me to see that this important legislation passes the House. I especially want to thank Chairman BARNEY FRANK for his leadership, Ranking Member JUDY BIGGERT, and CHRISTOPHER SHAYS for their original cosponsorship and support of H.R. 1851.

It has been less than 2 months since the Committee on Financial Services considered major reforms to the section 8 program. The Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, which passed the Committee on Financial Services by a vote of 52–9, is truly the culmination of work that began in the 109th Congress.

There are many Members of Congress who have expressed major concerns to me about the future stability of the section 8 voucher program, given the recent changes in the funding formula and its impact on tenants. This bill addresses many of those problems and will return much needed stability to the section 8 program and the 2 million low-income families who rely upon it.

We heard from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, public housing agencies, national housing interest groups and advocates, and other housing experts about the importance of reforming the section 8 program. While there is consensus that the section 8 program needed to be reformed, HUD disagrees on how to reform the program.

National housing organizations like the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities which represent those directly affected by the change in the funding formula agree that basing the funding for a program as important as the voucher program on data that is 3 years old is just simply bad policy.

In 2004, Congress changed how we paid public housing authorities for vouchers under lease. Instead of paying the actual cost of the voucher, the decision was made to pay for what the

voucher cost during a 3-month period in the previous year. This had disastrous consequences for PHAs. Many saw a cut in their funding.

While section 8 recipients had to bear the brunt of this policy change as waiting lists closed, many low-income families who had been waiting for affordable housing for years suddenly found housing denied to them. Because of cost concerns, some families were denied their right to move to areas that may have been a bit more expensive but had better job and educational opportunities. Some families saw an increase in rent as many PHAs scrambled to cut costs.

As families struggled under this formula, so did some of our Nation's largest PHAs. The snapshot funding system had consistently and has consistently underpaid some PHAs to the benefit of others. Because of the funding instability, these PHAs had no reason to house more families. As a result, housing authorities are sitting on $1.4 billion in unspent voucher funds. This nonuse of our voucher dollars is unacceptable because we have lost 150,000 vouchers as a direct result of the funding formula.

Clearly, this formula must be changed for the good of public housing agencies and the families they serve. HUD is just wrong in this issue. I flatly reject their just-released statement of policy on the bill. H.R. 1851 updates the voucher formula by basing funding for vouchers on the previous year's leasing and cost data.

The use of more accurate data will ensure that we stop overpaying and underpaying PHAs for vouchers, but instead come as close as we can to paying the actual cost of the voucher. This will enable HUD to better control costs than the section 8 voucher program. This funding approach was recently embraced by both Houses of Congress in H.J. Res. 20.

Vouchers are a scarce resource, but are even scarcer since the funding formula changed in 2004. Only one out of four families who are eligible for housing assistance, including vouchers, actually receive it. H.R. 1851 provides PHAs with several resources for increasing the number of families they serve.

First, the bill provides for the recapture and redistribution of most unspent voucher funds for housing agencies that have chosen not to use these dollars to PHAs that are capable and willing to spend them. This reallocation system will provide PHAs with an incentive to house more families.

Second, the bill provides tools for PHAs to pay for increased costs or emergencies without having to cut assistance to families or to request new funding from the HUD or the Congress. The bill allows PHAs to retain up to a 1-month reserve in the formula's first year. For those PHAs that need additional funds, the bill allows them to borrow up to 2 percent of their budget authority, to be repaid within the first 3 months of the following year.

Third, the bill provides an authorization of appropriation for 20,000 new incremental vouchers per year for 5 years. Congress has not authorized new vouchers since 2002.

During this period, we all know that the need for voucher assistance has grown, not declined. We are not meeting the need for housing vouchers for very low-income persons in this country, working families, the disabled and elderly. Additional vouchers are needed to make sure that the voucher program continues to keep up with the ever-expanding need for affordable housing in this Nation.

Fourth, the bill provides incentives for PHAs to increase families served by tying administrative funding to the number of families housed.

Fifth, the bill restores housing choice, an important feature of the voucher program which has been lost because of cost concerns. H.R. 1851 would eliminate the complex billing process between PHAs using portable vouchers.

Mr. Chairman, this is a bill that will restore stability and predictability to the Nation's largest Federal housing program by fixing the broken funding formula. H.R. 1851 provides for the needs of the families, public housing agencies and landlords who participate in this program.

The funding formula, however, is not the only aspect of the section 8 program in need of reform. Today, housing agencies and program recipients must deal with the complicated set of rules for the determination of rent, recertification of income and inspection of housing units. H.R. 1851 simplifies those requirements, while maintaining current affordable standards.

H.R. 1851 also includes tools to encourage voucher families to move to economic self-sufficiency. Families should not have to pay more in rent because they want to work to provide for their families. By disregarding a portion of earned income, H.R. 1851 would protect families from any resultant increases in rent.

Families also shouldn't be penalized for pursuing educational opportunities. Currently, many families in the voucher and public housing programs can find themselves excluded from work and economic opportunities because of a lack of credit history or low credit scores. The bill would allow the Department to work with the Nation's credit bureaus to allow for the reporting of the rental payment history of voucher and public housing recipients.

In addition, the bill will increase homeownership opportunities for voucher families by allowing them to use a section 8 voucher to make a down payment on their first home. Importantly, the bill provides for a change to the funding structure for family self-sufficiency coordinated to ensure that families have the tools to take advantage of these opportunities.

Without going into all of what is taken care of and what is reformed, I have tried to share the major reforms that we have created for our families who will be receiving assistance through the section 8 program.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I would like first to thank all of my colleagues and their staffs from both sides of the aisle for working to craft a bipartisan section 8 reform bill that we are considering today. In particular I would like to thank Chairman FRANK and Subcommittee Chairwoman WATERS for their hard work, committee Ranking Member BACHUS for his support, and the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. SHAYS, who joined me as an original cosponsor of this bill.

Mr. Chairman, this is a bipartisan bill that passed out of our committee by a vote of 52–9. It is similar to the section 8 reform bill that then Chairman Oxley moved through the Financial Services Committee during the last Congress. It was a bipartisan bill then too, passing out of the committee by a voice vote.

The section 8, or Housing Choice Voucher Program, is the major Federal program helping the elderly, the disabled and the very low-income families find affordable housing in the private market. Today's housing vouchers are the primary tool of assistance provided under section 8.

Many of my colleagues served in this body when housing vouchers were first proposed and implemented under a Republican administration, that of President Reagan. The Section 8 Voucher Program was designed to move people away from large concentrated housing projects, like our Cabrini-Green or Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago. It allows individuals to make decisions about where they want to live, instead of forcing them to live in large public housing projects filled with crime, poverty and despair.

For the colleagues on my side of the aisle, I should admit, quite frankly, that this bill is better than I expected it to be. We have been able to get several key issues addressed in this bill that were not addressed in last year's Republican legislation.

I want to thank Chairman WATERS, who coauthored with me a manager's amendment that the committee accepted during our markup that includes a number of provisions to increase the flexibility of project-based section 8 vouchers. It amended section 8 of the law regarding the use of vouchers to purchase manufactured homes, voucher reserves, portability, performance assessment, disabled vouchers and rent levels.

In addition, I am pleased that included in this bill is language that is identical to the Family Self-Sufficiency Act, or FSS, a bill that I introduced as a stand-alone measure. This

bill enhances HUD's FSS program by providing housing authorities with consistent coordinator funding. Housing authorities can then help more individuals move from public assistance to being self-sufficient homeowners.

Perhaps most important for Members on my side of the aisle is that this bill includes a significant expansion of Moving to Work, or the MTW program. Members on both sides of the aisle have public housing authorities in their district that seek to become Moving to Work housing authorities.

In my district, DuPage Housing Authority would like this status. However, to date, Congress has only authorized 32 housing authorities to be MTWs. During the committee markup, we increased the authorization to a total of 80, which is a remarkable achievement. In addition, the Moving to Work provisions in this bill require HUD to craft standards that will govern eligibility requirements from being considered and/or designated as a Moving to Work authority. This bill includes important tenant protections that make the MTW Program better than it is today.

Finally, I am also pleased that we included a provision that will measure the success of the program. Congress created the Moving to Work program in 1996, but it does not require HUD to establish standards and evaluate agencies' performance.

□ 1915

Now granted, the administration does not support this bill, nor did it support the Oxley bill last year or in the previous Congress.

Why? Well, because in their view, it does not reform the program enough. They believe it moves the program from one that is currently budget based to a unit-based system that Mr. KNOLLENBERG spoke about earlier. But I think that point is subject to interpretation. And politics is the art of the possible; and absent this bill, no reform is possible.

This bill does not include everything that I wanted either. The section 8 funding formula my colleagues will recall was changed in the CR earlier this year. I have on several occasions offered amendments in committee to address this formula change, and we did include in the manager's amendment a provision that will provide PHAs a cushion in the transition year so they are not penalized for CR formula change.

I believe there is more work to be done. There are 1,200 PHAs. Half of those across the country do not suffer from unjustified and significant funding cuts as a result of the new section 8 funding formula included in the CR.

Chairman FRANK has agreed to engage in a colloquy with me about this, and I look forward to doing that in a few moments. I hope we will continue to work together as we continue to address the continued shortcomings of this formula.

This is a good bill and one deserving of our support, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote for it.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield Chairman FRANK such time as he may consume.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I thank the gentlewoman, not so much for yielding but for the really extraordinary work she has done on this, the gentlewoman from California, and I want to say how much I admire the two tracks she has worked on. On the one track, she has been one of the leaders on our side in the House on the issue of Iraq and ending our involvement in the war in Iraq where I am a strong follower of her.

Simultaneously, she has engaged in some very careful and thoughtful legislative work, and I think that is the mark of a complete legislator, to be able to do the ideologically based advocacy but also work in a bipartisan way, continuing work which began when she was the ranking member and in a seamless way to go forward.

I spoke during the rule where I expressed my strong support for the legislation. I have rarely seen legislation so broadly supported by the landlords, by the local housing authorities that administer it and by the beneficiaries. There is a three-way operation here, and all of them consider this bill to be an improvement.

As the gentlewoman from Illinois said, it does not improve everything as much as everybody would like; nothing ever does. But she is correct, this is an improvement. I would ask my friend from California to yield to her so we can talk about it, but she has already done some of the things that she talked about. For instance, in the manager's amendment, we will increase the reserves available to housing authorities to avoid any damage that would come in the transition on the new funding formula. I know the gentlewoman has some other concerns, and I hope if the gentlewoman from California will yield to her, I can respond to them.

Ms. WATERS. I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT).

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentlewoman, and I would like to engage in a colloquy with Chairman FRANK at this time.

Chairman FRANK, as you may recall, the section 8 funding formula was changed through provisions in the continuing resolution. I did not support these changes because they did cut about 1,500 public housing authority slots in three counties in my congressional district. And as Chairman FRANK can verify, I have on several occasions offered amendments to change this.

I am pleased that the manager's amendment includes a provision which addresses this problem. While I am pleased that we can take productive steps towards addressing the shortcomings, I believe we can do more as we move on, and it is my understanding that members of the Appropriations Committee have included a similar provision in the fiscal year 2008 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Appropriations bill. Would the chairman consider supporting this?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentlewoman has stated this correctly. I know this is going to be in the appropriations bill. We expect it. I haven't seen the appropriations bill yet. I have great confidence in the subcommittee chairman, but I certainly agree with her in principle. And unless there is some very unusual wording which we could change, yes, I would be subject to saying, yes, that is exactly what we intend.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I thank the gentleman.

Again regarding the rebenchmarking, both the current formula and the one in this bill would base a PHA's annual funding level on a ''snapshot'' of the PHA's use of funds from the previous 12 months. However, I continue to be concerned that his annual benchmarking is unworkable when coupled with the congressional budget cycle. For this reason, I hope we can continue to work together as we move forward to address the continued shortcomings of this formula. PHAs have always stated and continue to argue that their main concern is to have predictability and certainty in funding so they can plan both voucher utilization and staffing. I know they would appreciate more predictability. If the snapshot and the rebenchmarking were done every other year, would the chairman continue to explore with me the benefits of a biennial versus annual rebenchmarking?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The answer is, again, yes. This is a very important subject which the gentlewoman from Illinois has identified. I promise we will work together. If we decide this needs to be a legislative change, I can promise the gentlelady that the committee will entertain the appropriate legislation and do that.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Again, I thank the gentleman.

In addition, I would like to ask the chairman to consider other measures to assist PHAs in the transition period and in the subsequent years. For example, I would like the chairman to consider a so-called hold-harmless provision attached to the new section 8 formula. The provision would provide PHAs with an assurance that they would not lose more than a certain percentage of funds in any given year due to the utilization rates in the previous years. The reasons for this are many, but at the heart of the matter is the simple fact that the so-called excess in funds that many PHAs were caught with when the new formula was dropped into the CR were not in fact excess at all but the result of deliberate choices, court-ordered requirements or special set-aside categories of

vouchers. The PHAs should not be losing all of these vouchers in the first year. The percentage could range from perhaps 10 to 25 percent. And again, PHAs deserve stability and predictability in funding. Would the chairman work with me to craft a hold-harmless provision to include in this bill or the appropriations bill?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The answer here is definitely yes. I think a hold-harmless provision is appropriate.

The purpose of the change, as the gentlewoman knows, in our mind was to prevent a kind of downward ratcheting in the overall usage. But consistent with that, we don't want to penalize particular authorities.

We have already done some work, for instance, with the Dade County authority to take into account the fact that their shortfall came because of a hurricane, so they were not penalized by that. But the hold-harmless provision is a perfectly reasonable one, and I agree with the gentlewoman. I promise to work with the gentlewoman to do whatever we need to do legislatively to accomplish it.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Again, I thank the chairman; and thank the gentlewoman for the time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER), a member of the Committee on Financial Services.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act.

This is something we have been working on for years, and I am pleased we have it to this point today. I commend Chairman FRANK. BARNEY, you have been great to work with on these issues. When we express concerns, he is always willing to look at policy rather than politics. We have arrived at a bill we can all look at and say, there are things we might change, but overall, we all agree it is a good bill.

I would like to commend Ranking Member BACHUS for all of his help and assistance. Chairman WATERS, it has been fun working with you on this issue, as well as Ranking Member BIGGERT.

Working together in a bipartisan manner, we have produced a bill that will help the section 8 program better serve families and communities across the country.

Over the years, Congress has grappled with the skyrocketing cost of the section 8 program, which is growing so rapidly that HUD's other programs are suffering as a result.

It is not feasible for the Federal Government to continue increasing funds for a program without enacting meaningful reforms.

In the 109th Congress, I introduced legislation to improve the delivery of housing assistance to families in need by providing flexibility to local public housing authorities, PHAs, and holding them accountable for results.

The goal of my legislation was to ensure that PHAs would serve as many families as possible within their budget. While the bill before us today does not go as far as my proposal in injecting flexibility to PHAs in their administration of the entire section 8 program, H.R. 1851 does make a number of improvements to the section 8 program to reform the simplified regulations for local housing agencies.

I appreciate Chairman FRANK's willingness to work with me to allow for PHA innovation on a scale he is more comfortable with. While the bill before us does not apply flexibility to the entire program, I am pleased it at least allows a permanency and expansion of the Moving To Work program, renamed in this bill as the Housing Innovation Program, HIP.

The Moving to Work Program has allowed a small group of PHAs to create locally based housing programs outside of HUD's one-size-fits-all regulations. The program has enabled PHAs to create jobs for residents, add affordable housing stock and help families build savings.

Currently, over 24 of the more than 3,000 PHAs nationwide are participating in the Moving to Work program. H.R. 1851 provides access to more agencies nationwide seeking MTW status.

Through the new HIP program, we will be able to take away ''best practices'' to apply to the entire section 8 program in the future. I am confident that the innovation that will be produced through the flexibility provided in the HIP will demonstrate ways to truly reform section 8 so we can serve more families efficiently and help move them to self-sufficiency.

The manager's amendment, which will be debated later this evening, includes language I crafted to provide PHAs with the flexibility to establish rent structures as they see best to address the needs of their communities.

The language gives PHAs the flexibility to select from a menu of tenant rent policies, including flat rent, rents based on income ranges, rents based on percentage of income, or other innovative rent policies.

HUD and many PHAs agree that the current Federal approach to tenant rent contribution is a regressive system that penalizes residents by charging higher rents for those who gain employment and income.

If a section 8 recipient's salary increases, so does their rent. This creates a disincentive for work. Our goal should be to provide a helping hand to those who need it but also ensure that they are on a path to self-sufficiency. Rather than providing incentives for work, the current section 8 program provides incentives for people to lie about their income or to reject opportunities to increase their income since they would be forced to pay more rent. I don't think this is a message we should be sending in this program. We should be instilling responsibility and desire to achieve in our housing assistance policy, not encouraging dishonesty and creating disincentives for success.

I am pleased the chairman has worked with me on language to allow PHAs the option of setting rents in innovative ways to help families achieve self-sufficiency.

The reality is that we face a situation of growing waiting lists for section 8 vouchers without the resources to serve everyone. The answer is not to merely throw more money into an existing regressive system in a department where there are other pressing needs that need to be met. We need to move current section 8 recipients to self-sufficiency by allowing PHAs to be innovative with the money they do have, to be efficient and help as many people in need move through the program as possible.

While this bill does not go as far as I think we need it to go in terms of allowing flexibility, I believe it is a step in the right direction and will make needed improvements to the section 8 program. I look forward to the debate on the amendments tonight as I believe we can continue to improve the legislation as we move forward.

I would like to enter into a colloquy with the chairman, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK).

There seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of HUD. Mr. FRANK, this bill includes a revision and expansion of the Moving to Work Program, MTW, renamed the Housing Innovation Program, HIP. Under the program authority of HIP, the Secretary may designate up to 60 public housing agencies to fully participate in the program, and an additional 20 public housing agencies may participate in the program under what is called the HIP-Lite provisions.

Under the current MTW program, authorization has been granted for 32 public housing authorities to participate in the program. However, HUD narrowly defined the legislative authority under which they could solicit new applications. HUD decided that once PHAs leave the program, no new agencies can be selected to fill their vacancy. The result is, out of 32 authorized, only 24 agencies are currently in the program.

I would like to confirm that the intent of this bill is to allow HUD to solicit new applications in order to maintain the program at its fully authorized level and to give PHAs the opportunity to fill any vacancies.

I would like to confirm that you agree that the secretary of HUD should promptly solicit new applications from PHAs interested in participating in the HIP program whenever the number of agencies is less than the total authorized level, and that would be 60 under this bill; is that correct, sir?

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Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, the gentleman from California is absolutely correct. The alternative interpretation would make no sense.

Of course, HUD should have and does have the authority to select replacements. What we set was a maximum number of participating agencies, and if an agency withdraws, then a new agency should be replaced.

If I may, I should note that the chairman of the subcommittee, who is such a devoted supporter of fairness, has raised some questions about the Moving to Work program, or whatever the new name is, and I have spoken with her. And I think what would be appropriate, and I think we would all agree, when we return from the summer recess to have a hearing on how the Moving to Work program is, in fact, operating, and I think that would be an appropriate thing to do.

But certainly under this law and under the agreements we reached, we set a number of housing authorities that are eligible to participate, and there shouldn't be any question, if an authority drops out, then HUD has the obligation, not just the permission, but the obligation to replace it.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I thank you.

So HUD understands, if it does drop to 50, it should be moved up promptly to 60, and I look forward to the hearing.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ANDREWS) 2 minutes.

(Mr. ANDREWS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the chairwoman, my friend from California, for yielding.

The chairwoman and I came to this Congress on the very same day in 1990, and I'm extremely proud of the work she's done on this bill and gratified to support it.

I especially want to thank her for including language that I think will help underdogs, and the chairwoman has been a friend of the underdog for a very long time, and in her work in Sacramento she achieved her visions where tenants who were being mistreated by landlords, where the property was not being properly kept up and was not habitable, would be given the option of withholding rent in order to force repairs on the property. She's taken that provision and extended that principle in this bill in a way for which I salute her.

The bill contains provisions that say in situations where a public housing authority chooses, when notified of serious code violations by a tenant, it may take actions to withhold part of the section 8 voucher payment that would otherwise go to the landlord. And the purpose of this would be to empower the public housing authority under certain circumstances to deduct that amount of money and pay for the repairs.

What does this mean? It means a powerless person who doesn't have a political action committee or a lobbyist or a lot of political power but who needs their sink fixed or a broken window repaired or a heater repaired for the first time is going to have sufficient leverage to do so.

I think this will have three very important effects. First, it will be fair and right for these tenants. Second, it will be fair for landlords. If the tenant is the cause of the problem or if a landlord is acting responsibly, this poses no burden on a landlord. And third, it will help responsible local officials prevent blight and degradation of certain neighborhoods so that each person can live in an environment that's proper and good for their family.

So I want to thank the chairwoman for her characteristic advocacy on behalf of the underdog, for taking this idea, and I would urge support of the bill.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE), a member of the committee.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank my good friend from Illinois for yielding, and I want to thank also the Chair of the committee and Chair of the subcommittee for the work that they have done on this, and the ranking member.

I rise to express a few sincere and serious concerns with section 9 of the bill. This is the section that allows the public housing authorities, or the PHAs, to report the rental payments of its tenants to credit reporting agencies.

Reporting alternative data, like rental payments, to the credit reporting agencies may indeed be a very good thing. The hope obviously is that increased alternative data will help improve the credit reports for consumers and, in the long run, provide them with better and less expensive access to credit. In this increasingly credit-drive society, that's truly an important thing.

However, I've got four specific concerns with the way that the language in section 9 of this bill is written.

First is the format that this data will take. The language of the underlying bill requires the PHAs and credit reporting agencies to establish a system and format for reporting the new data. This is obviously new territory for PHAs, and they haven't done it before and aren't financial institutions and have no history of providing reporting data in the proper format.

Second concern is that this section may be incorrectly read to constitute a new requirement on the credit reporting agencies, and I would submit that this would be a drastic and significant change to our current system. Currently, credit reporting agencies must consider the timeliness of the data supplied to them. They must verify that it is accurate data, ensure that there hasn't been any case of identity fraud so that false data is not included in an unsuspecting consumer's credit file. Rental payment, clearly that information is different than other forms of commerce, and it may need to be treated differently.

A third concern is that the section, as it reads, would apply to ''families receiving tenant-based housing choice vouchers.'' Credit files historically are unique to individuals. Credit reporting agencies have no way to adjust their credit files for an entire family. So I wonder again sincerely what the real consequences of this ambiguity and potentially harmful aspect are to spreading potential financial responsibility to some without regard to accountability.

My fourth concern may be the most important, and that is, that the underlying legislation requires that the PHA, or the public housing agency, gain the permission of the family in writing before submitting the data to credit reporting agencies. This provision potentially would turn our credit reporting system on its head. It's a 100-year-old system based on the voluntary reporting of data to credit reporting agencies. If consumers are able to turn on or off when the data is reported, then it, in its essence, undermines completely the accuracy of the credit reports.

Both those who furnish the data to the credit reporting agencies and those who use that data to offer credit to consumers rely on the accuracy of these reports so that they can appropriately and responsibly price the cost of credit to a specific consumer. If someone can decide not to submit certain data to a credit reporting agency, then the accuracy of that data will be greatly compromised.

I sincerely believe that a few minor changes to the underlying legislation would indeed perfect the language in a way that would allow for new alternative data to help consumers and also to have that new data submitted in a way that does not undermine a credit reporting system that truly has become the envy of the world.

It's my hope that we can work on these concerns as this legislation moves forward, and once again, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for her time and thank the Chair of the committee and subcommittee for their work on this issue.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL) 2 minutes.

(Mr. PASCRELL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Chairman, I'm honored to rise in support of H.R. 1851. I commend Chairman FRANK and Chairwoman WATERS for bringing this worthy legislation to the floor today.

This bipartisan bill will increase efficiency in our section 8 housing voucher

program and expand rental assistance opportunities, authorizing 20,000 new section 8 vouchers in each of the next 5 years, with a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

Section 8 rental assistance is a critical and widely used program, with approximately 2 million vouchers being distributed by more than 2,500 local public housing authorities.

I would like to draw attention to one specific provision of this legislation which will have widespread benefits, if we did nothing else today, and I think is the most meaningful thing we're doing today, by the way, if I may express my opinion, will have widespread benefits for housing authorities throughout this Nation, including those in my district.

In 2004, a new formula was instituted to fund public housing authorities that administer the section 8 program. The formula was based on a snapshot of PHA activity for May, June, and July of 2004. As a result, whatever a housing authority's needs were during that short period, they have been stuck with that number ever since. It is simply irrational to fund a program today based on what its needs were 3 years ago.

Some housing authorities were continually overfunded, some were underfunded. This provision left some housing authorities scrambling for funds and others with extra funding they couldn't access.

The bill we are considering today fixes this inefficient and outdated formula, requiring HUD to use data from the most recent 12 months to determine section 8 voucher funding. It's going to help a lot of people, a lot of people. Now funding will be guaranteed for all vouchers in use.

Even this administration has admitted that this flawed formula should be revised. I applaud the Financial Services Committee for including a fix in this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1851.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL), another member of the Financial Services Committee, to engage in a colloquy with Chairman FRANK.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I just wanted to bring to the chairman's attention a situation with HUD financing that kind of makes no sense to me, and a specific situation which I'm aware of involves the Villa Nueva Apartments, which are in San Ysidro in the San Diego area of California, where the owner of this multi-family, affordable housing project wants to sell it. The buyer wants to keep it as an affordable housing project. He's committed to keep the rents unchanged, but yet since it is HUD financed, under current, I guess, rulings or something that HUD is making, that 100 percent of the proceeds of this project would actually not be available to the seller. I don't know why someone who owns something would want to sell it if they couldn't have any of the proceeds. So, as a result, the seller may not sell this project. They may hold on to it for a couple of years, and then the restrictions will expire and then they could sell it for something else.

So it seems to me that HUD's procedures on this are actually standing in the way of affordable housing companies acquiring and continuing affordable housing multi-unit projects.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I thank the gentleman from California.

I appreciate the gentleman from California making this very important point because it gives us a chance to highlight an important issue that this committee will be acting on.

I should just note that later today we will be considering an amendment on behalf of the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) in similar circumstances, and we will be directing HUD to allow these to go forward.

The gentleman just learned of this, I know, and brought it to our attention, and I would begin by saying to him, if necessary, I would be supportive of doing the same in his case. I hope it won't be necessary.

Here's the situation that may people may not understand. Forty years ago and more, or about 40 years ago, we began, not us, with the exception of Mr. DINGELL, began a program of affordable housing where the Federal Government lent people money at either no interest or very low interest in return for it being affordable, but for some reason they put what they called an expiration date of 40 years.

Now, we stand to lose a lot of housing that is good housing currently affordable. We are looking for ways to let that be transferred to others who would keep that it way. I think HUD is being overly technical in some of these interpretations. It would clearly be in everybody's interest, for no budgetary cost we can preserve these units.

By the way, if the units are lost, what then happens is, under certain laws, the current tenants are entitled to enhanced vouchers. So we would then be paying more in enhanced vouchers to a new landlord. That doesn't make sense.

I just want to make this commitment to the gentleman. I hope after today's bill, which I hope it passes and the amendments for Mr. MARKEY and Ms. PRYCE are passed, that we can then sit with HUD on a bipartisan basis and try and find a way for them to do this administratively. If they tell us that they need a small fix, if there's some legislative problem, we could do that on suspension immediately. Even the Senate would do that one quickly.

I would say this. I hope that we will, today, get HUD's attention so that we can sit with them and work this out. I would rather have it done in policy. If necessary, we'll do a little fix.

And I would also say before the end of this year, and this is high on the agenda of the gentlewoman from California and myself, because this situation occurs all over the country in everybody's district or in most districts, if necessary, we will pass a bill that will give HUD all the authority necessary to prevent this loss of affordable housing for no good reason.

So I admire the gentleman for bringing it to our attention. I think, frankly, if we pass this bill and pass the Markey-Pryce amendment, we'll probably get a better response out of HUD, and if necessary, we will legislate it.

Mr. CAMPBELL of California. Thank you.

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Ms. WATERS. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA).

Mr. BACA. I want to thank my colleague for yielding. I rise also to support the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.

I want to thank my good friend from California, Chairman MAXINE WATERS, for sponsoring this vital legislation.

I also want to thank our chair, Chairman FRANK, for his leadership and guidance in this committee.

Mr. Chairman, in 2004, when the administration decided to change the funding formula for section 8 vouchers, drastic cuts were made to the number of vouchers available. These cuts hurt needy families throughout the Nation and throughout my district. We are talking about seniors, low-income families, disabled, the poor, the disadvantaged.

In my district alone, section 8 housing vouchers, public housing units, provide affordable housing for more than 32,000 people. Can you imagine, 32,000 people right now, children and others, that would not have a home, not have a place to rent, that would be homeless if it hadn't been for section 8? This bill reverses the cut and adds an additional 20,000 vouchers so that families are not forced to choose between paying for food, their medication or rent.

We are talking about people that can't afford housing, even right now, with the inflation and the cost that is going on right now. We have got to make sure that they have a home, they have stability, and they have a roof over their head, especially for our children.

I appreciate my colleague on the other side, GARY MILLER, supporting this legislation as well. We worked on some of the amendments. I appreciate that very much.

It also contains key provisions that strengthen section 8 programs, including protection for individuals with limited English proficiency and the expansion to Moving To Work programs. I

urge my colleagues to support this most vulnerable program that helps us, and especially as it pertains to helping the poor, the disadvantaged.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, might I inquire of the time remaining on either side of the aisle?

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman from Illinois has 10½ minutes.

The gentlewoman from California has 9 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman and Members, I am so very proud of the work of this committee.

I am so very, very pleased and honored to have the opportunity to work with BARNEY FRANK. Not only is he a committed public policy maker, he is smart, and he is creative. And he is helping us to understand how to use this wonderful opportunity that has been afforded to us to do good for the people of this country.

I am so pleased about this particular bill, because I am so keenly aware of the housing crisis that we have in this country.

As we stand here this evening, there are people who are sleeping under bridges; living with them are families, children. Some of them are veterans. I come from a time and place where people did not have decent housing. I know, too, that not only has this occurred for many years in this country, where people have been living in substandard housing, even today we have people without running water. We have people without proper health facilities of any kind in their homes.

We have families that are crowded into one and two rooms. We have people whose roofs were leaking this evening. But because of this government and our ability to help government understand what it can do to help the least fortunate, we are able to pass this kind of legislation.

I want to thank my friends on the opposite side of the aisle, again, Mrs. BIGGERT, for the cooperation that I have enjoyed working with her.

Mr. Chairman, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK).

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I thank the gentlewoman.

Mr. Chairman, again, I want to emphasize, this is a process that began when the Republicans were in power, when Mr. Ney was the chairman.

The gentlewoman from California was the ranking minority member and has continued in her chairmanship. The gentlewoman from Illinois is the ranking member. This is an example of how you can make something better and deliver better, with one exception, there is no additional money in this bill.

I hope that we will succeed in authorizing 20,000 new vouchers. That's an issue we will debate, although it is subject to appropriation, as to whether or not it gets done. I think our appropriator friends would like to do it.

But most of what this does is to improve the delivery. We talk about it a lot. It isn't always done. And in that context, we often thank the staff.

This is a case where the staff of the Financial Services Committee and subcommittee on both sides, we already did a great deal of work; this is a more technical bill than many that have come forward.

This is a less than ideological breakthrough. We hope to have some of those. We have had in the past. It's more a systemic examination of a very large program with improvements of a technical and specific sort in many aspects of it. It took a good deal of hard work, and it took a good deal of mutual cooperation.

As I said, there were some differences, and we will debate those differences, but it should be made clear that those differences come within a context of a broad agreement on making the program better.

There is a lot of talk about waste and fraud and abuse. Waste and fraud and abuse are more generally decried around here than diminished. This is a bill that will make it much less likely that money will be wasted, much less likely that there will be an abuse of the public purse. As I said, let me say in closing, it is to the credit of the gentlewoman from California, the gentlewoman from Illinois, and the people who have worked with them.

Every stakeholder is a supporter of this bill, the landlords, the tenants, the advocacy groups, the housing authorities that administer it. It is rare that you get this degree of agreement. It's a process that began with civil conversation. I am pleased to see, at least on this night, it's going to end with a civil conversation, and the product will be significant improvements in one of the most important social programs in the Federal Government.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Let me thank the distinguished gentlelady from Illinois for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, this is a historic occasion, a historic time. I want to express my appreciation to the chairman of the full committee, Mr. FRANK, and the chairwoman of the subcommittee, Congresswoman WATERS, and the ranking members, for what I hope will ultimately be an enormous step forward for the homeless and the underserved.

I also want to acknowledge my colleague and friend, Congressman AL GREEN, who has worked so hard to ensure that cities who have the background of Houston, Texas, are also accounted for. Those are cities that have for years had thousands of individuals on the waiting list.

I think the number 25,000 in Houston has literally become a number of the decade, because there has been a waiting list of 25,000 for as long as I can remember, having served on the Houston City Council.

I am very pleased to acknowledge that we are going to reorder the formula so that cities can borrow against moneys that are already in their account, so that the cities that have an excessive number of individuals on the waiting list can still be able to utilize those dollars.

I want to pay special attention to the resources that will be utilized for the disabled and special resources that are going to be utilized for innovative programs dealing with, for example, the housing innovation program, which has previously been Moving to Work.

One of the issues that I hope that we will look forward to is giving incentives to cities to help them reduce the waiting list. Now, you can change the formula, and I had an amendment that would provide at least a pilot study to construct, if you will, an incentive to make sure that cities took advantage of this new structure and worked hard to reduce the waiting list.

It is one thing to have the laws in place. It is another thing to have housing authorities sit by and just watch, rather than working very hard to bring down their list.

I am very grateful that we now have an understanding that there is less and less affordable housing being built in America. These individuals that use section 8 vouchers are working people, people who are paying their taxes, who cannot find housing in high-priced markets. This section 8 voucher program will allow these individuals to purchase homes. They are creative, unique and forward thinking, because they are individuals who have put their stake down in these particular areas.

I am also hoping, as I close, and I am hoping that we will continue to work on this issue, is to ensure individuals will not be put out because of combat pay for soldiers who are coming back.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1851, the "Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007." I support this bipartisan measure for three important reasons. First, H.R. 1851 reforms Section 8 vouchers to make their allocation more efficient and targets them based on need. Second, the legislation also increases access for rural families, and expands the number of families receiving housing vouchers. Third, the bill permits families to use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase, and includes other provisions to encourage family self-sufficiency including incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement.

I wish to express my special thanks to the Chair of the Financial Services Committee, Mr. FRANK, for his leadership and commitment to affordable housing for low and moderate income families. Let me also thank the gentlewoman from California, Ms. WATERS, the Chair

of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity for her yeoman work in bringing this important and much needed legislation to the House floor today.

Mr. Chairman, a strong America requires strong families and communities. Affordable housing is critical to maintaining strong families and communities. Section 8 housing vouchers provide vital rental assistance for low-income families, seniors, and the disabled to help them afford housing. The Section 8 housing voucher program contributes to the strengthening of our nation. Let me discuss briefly for our colleagues some of the more beneficial provisions in the legislation.

The legislation eliminates inefficiencies that have resulted in $1.4 billion in unused funds and provides incentives for agencies to use funds to assist more families. Thus, the voucher Funding Formula is made more efficient and will lead to an increase in the number of families receiving vouchers. And that is good because the number of housing vouchers issued has declined more than 150,000 since 2004. The bill authorizes 20,000 incremental vouchers in each of the next five years, for a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

Mr. Chairman, I also support this legislation because it protects tenant rights, promotes home ownership, and encourages economic self-sufficiency for low income voucher and public housing families. The legislation also protects housing agencies adversely affected by formula changes, by allowing them to use voucher reserves in the transition to maintain the number of families being assisted.

Homeownership is promoted because, for the first time, families will be permitted to use housing vouchers as a down-payment on a first-time home purchase, and to use vouchers for purchase of a manufactured home on leased land. Economic self-sufficiency for low income voucher and public housing families is encouraged because H.R. 1851 includes several incentives for families to obtain employment, increase earned income, pursue higher education, and save for retirement. The bill also increases voucher opportunities for lower-income working families in rural areas.

Finally, the bill contains several tenant protections, including provisions to preserve voucher families' ability to move to other areas, to address excessive voucher rent burdens, to provide for more accurate fair market rent calculations, and to protect voucher holders in units that are in need of repair.

Mr. Chairman, for millions of our fellow citizens, finding safe and affordable housing is still a constant and often futile struggle. Today, about 1.4 million households nationwide participate in the voucher program; but not all qualified applicants are guaranteed housing. The demand for housing assistance consistently exceeds the limited resources available from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and local government agencies. Long waiting lists have, unfortunately, become very common.

In my hometown of Houston, the largest city in Texas, and the fourth largest in the United States, there is a multi-year backlog of applications for individuals seeking government assistance. It is not unusual for individuals and families to be placed on the waiting list for more than three years.

I believe it imperative that something be done to reduce this backlog. That is why I offered an amendment to the bill that would establish a pilot program to aid in the reduction of Section 8 waiting list.

Mr. Chairman, I also offered an amendment providing that funds received by a section 8 family from a family member serving in the Armed Forces in a hostile combat theater be excluded from the computation of income for eligibility purposes.

The military is one of Americans most precious resources and one whose efforts ought to never be taken for granted. Daily, these men and women in uniform risk their lives to ensure the national security and safety of our country. One way to express our gratitude to them is to offer relief to their family members.

Eligibility for housing vouchers is typically based on the family size and the total annual gross income, which ought to not exceed 50 percent of the median income for the area in which they choose to live. HUD's Housing Voucher (HCV) handbook lists both special pay (except pay received by a service member who is exposed to hostile fire) and the Base Housing Allowance (BAH) as income for purposes of determining a family's income eligibility. Excluding monies received by section 8 tenants from family members serving in combat zones when evaluating income eligibility for Section 8 housing would provide a little piece of mind to the families of these soldiers serving overseas.

The final amendment I offered sought to provide economic opportunities to Section 8 tenants by requiring the Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development carry out programs whereby public housing agencies develop curriculums and policies designed to increase employment and contracting opportunities for recipients of tenant-based rental assistance under the United States Housing Act of 1937. These economic opportunities can be in the form of maintenance, inspection, and management of rental properties for which rental assistance is provided.

Families living with Section 8 vouchers can achieve self-sufficiency through active participation in education and employment. Self-sufficiency eliminates the need to be dependent on public assistance and increase one's self esteem and sense of accomplishment. My amendment was intended to help section 8 become more economically independent.

But taken as a whole, Mr. Chairman, H.R. 1851 is a very good bill and represents a significant step forward in the direction of an enlightened policy of affordable housing. Accordingly, I strongly support H.R. 1851, the "Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007." I urge my colleagues to join in voting for this much need legislation.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER).

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Mr. Chairman, we have been working on housing issues for several years. I think we do have a very good job in this House coming to an agreement. Moving to the Senate, for some reason, things just don't happen as they should on that side of the Capitol.

But we have got tremendous housing shortages in this country that we have to deal with. We have to work on HOPE VI program to be more innovative to allow the private sector to get involved. We need to be able to take and move people through the system for public housing section 8 vouchers.

But the area we are really hurting in in this country is the move-up marketplace for people coming out of section 8, coming out of public housing and to be able to move into a house that's affordable. We all have problems in many of our districts where our children go away to college; we know people who, when their kids come back, they can't afford to live in the communities in which they were raised. We know many people who may be a school teacher, a police officer, a fireman, who drive 2 hours back and forth to work because they can't afford to live within the community in which they work. That should be a focus of Congress.

We not only have to deal with the HOPE VI program, we have to deal with the public housing program, the section 8. We have to look at streamlining the system where builders and developers in this country can bring affordable housing on line and make it available for people who are moving out of government assistance into homes of their home.

The Moving To Work program, I think, is going to work very well. It allows people to retain some earnings, to build up the savings to be able to afford to move into a home for the first time. We have a lot of nonprofits in this country that provide down-payment assistance, programs who help people that can afford a payment but don't have the cash on hand within which to be able to put down and pay the closing costs to move into a home.

We have got to look at the overall industry and say, how can we be innovative? How can we be creative? And how can we help people to help themselves? Now, I am a conservative. I don't believe in government programs going on forever. But I think people come to a point in their life where they need a helping hand.

We need to look at ways to help them go on their open to become self-sufficient. That's what I hope we do in Congress, not only look at reforming the government programs we have here today to make them more innovative, make them work for people. In L.A. County, there is a 10-year wait for people to go on vouchers or public housing. That has to change.

People wait for 10 years who are just as needy or more needy sometimes than people who are receiving assistance. But we have no way of moving those people out of government programs into their own homes.

That's what we need to look at, streamlining, removing the red tape, fast tracking, have some nexus between the cost that's assessed against the project and the actual cost of that project.

I want to commend BARNEY FRANK. Over the years, he and I have worked on more legislation on housing I think than any two Members from the Republican and Democrat side together that try to create programs that work for people. Tonight's bill might not be everything they want. I know it's not

everything that MAXINE WATERS and BARNEY FRANK wants, but it was an agreement between the two of us in a bipartisan fashion, Republicans and Democrats, to come and fashion a bill that would work.

I think this bill has some innovation. It makes some changes, and I think it moves us in a better direction. Are we where we should be completely? No, but we are moving in a good direction.

I look forward to cooperation from both sides.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

In closing, I would again like to thank the subcommittee chairwoman, Ms. WATERS, Chairman FRANK and Mr. SHAYS for introducing and working on this bill. I urge my colleagues to support the bill, which received a 52–9 vote coming out of our committee.

The bill we will vote on today is a good bill. It is the result of bipartisan cooperation. It contains many provisions more than in last year's bill that help families dependent upon public assistance become families that are independent and self-sufficient tax-paying productive members of society.

It's my sincere hope that we can further improve the bill, especially the sections involving the funding formula. I thank the chairman for agreeing to work with me on this.

I truly hope that we can move this bill beyond the House during this Congress and that the Senate and the administration will work with us to reform this important program.

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America's families and American children deserve a 21st-century section 8 program.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this moment to thank someone who is not here in the Congress with us at this time.

When we first started this legislation in the previous Congress, it was with Mr. Bob Ney who served as chair of the subcommittee; I was the ranking member; and we put this bill out on the floor where it passed this House, and he deserves credit for all the work that was done.

I would also like to thank some of the other members who we have not heard from this evening in general debate and hopefully we will hear from a little later on. Mr. GREEN from Texas who insisted that we expand the vouchers to make them available to the needy families who certainly have been standing in line waiting on section 8 vouchers.

I would like to thank Mr. DAVID SCOTT for being one of the most adamant and fierce defenders of the work that we have done and who has taken on the work of trying to educate some of our Members from the other side of the aisle, not only about the need, but how not to penalize the victims and people who are looking for housing opportunities who would not be able to get them but for section 8 and the work that we are doing.

With that, I would like to close by thanking the chairman who is so committed to helping those who need us most. He is certainly the kind of leader that we can depend on to make sure that everything possible is done, to utilize the time that we have been given in this committee to work for people who oftentimes have been dropped off of America's agenda. Again, he provides strong leadership. He is generous with sharing opportunities with everybody that serves on that committee. And it is because of that kind of leadership and, again, the cooperation from my friends on the opposite side of the aisle, Mrs. BIGGERT, Mr. MILLER, Mr. SHAYS, and others that we come to this floor tonight with a good strong bill that is going to help so very many people in this country, and it is the kind of public policy that makes us all feel very good about being elected officials.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1851, to reform the housing choice voucher program under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937. I commend the Honorable MAXINE WATERS for her leadership on this issue of pressing socioeconomic concern.

In 1937, we had a Nation still suffering from the Great Depression. In fact, in 1937, the economy fell into a recession which caused high unemployment and left many wondering how they would put a roof over their family's heads at night. In response to this problem, the United States Housing Act was enacted, which helped hard-working American families to stay off of the streets.

This bill also helped to push the United States policy of spending on infrastructure to help the economy, as promoted by the principles of Keynesian economics. In today's economy we are seeing a new problem emerge—the growing income gap.

According to a January 27, 2007, CNN report entitled, "Mind the gap: Income Inequality, State by State," Americans whose annual income places them in the top 5 percent of the income bracket "saw their incomes rise as much as 132 percent between 1980 and 2003. The bottom 20 percent of families, meanwhile, saw their incomes rise by no more than 24 percent." With such inequality today's housing crisis becomes obvious—the "haves" are purchasing more real-estate and thus driving housing costs to levels far above the budget of "have-nots."

Just as the Federal Government took the lead and helped struggling American families in 1937, we must step in and make sure their efforts are applicable to today's specific housing crisis by amending Section 8 of the United States Housing Act 1937 to address the problems of 2007.

In my district of the Virgin Islands I see multimillion dollar estates constructed in areas of previously low to moderate income. Often times this works to drive up property values and drive out those who can no longer afford to live in the area. It has driven up housing costs and even rental prices. This bill will help address this issue by adding 100,000 new Section 8 vouchers, and by expanding their use for home purchase as well as rent. It will allow a public housing agency to authorize a family in crisis to occupy housing immediately so they are not left on the streets while a slow moving bureaucratic agency "evaluates" them. H.R. 1851 also includes provisions to address existing inadequacies in the programs that have created long waiting lists and a program that has more applicants than available housing.

By passing H.R. 1851, Congress will take a much needed step towards improving a much needed program. I urge my colleagues to support this bill and help make a good program stronger and better.

Mr. ENGEL. Madam Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007. This bill will expand Section 8 Vouchers to improve system efficiency, encourage self-sufficiency, and increase the number of families who can participate. There are currently 20,370 vouchers in use in New York's 17th district which I proudly represent, and 2 million families using vouchers nationwide. These Section 8 Vouchers allow low-income families to choose the housing option that best fits their needs, and encourages permanent economic stability.

According to the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, there is funding for 150,000 vouchers that are not in use under the current Section 8 Voucher formula. By reforming Section 8 Vouchers, we put funding and vouchers in the hands of people who need them the most.

Madam Chairman, in New York we highly value Section 8 Vouchers housing. The vouchers provide much-needed assistance to families and individuals wishing to become more economically self-sufficient, but who lack the means to do so on their own. Simplifying and expanding Section 8 Vouchers will help alleviate a monumental housing crisis in the state of New York and throughout the country. H.R. 1851 relieves pressure on struggling communities and families and will bring economic security and self-sufficiency within their reach. H.R. 1851 reforms Section 8 Vouchers in a comprehensive and logical way, and I encourage my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Chairman, today's passage of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Act (SERVA) will improve greatly the housing voucher system—which is already successful and has been described by the Administration as one of the federal government's most effective programs.

Safe and affordable housing is one of my priorities and should be a national priority. Section 8 vouchers are a great tool for getting families into decent homes. Studies have shown that Section 8 vouchers reduce homelessness, overcrowding, and frequent moves from apartment to apartment. Affordable housing is critical to strong families and communities, and vouchers have allowed families to move to lower-poverty neighborhoods with better schools and less exposure to crime.

H.R. 1851 will only increase the success of Section 8 vouchers, which currently provides housing assistance to more than 2 million families, by making the program more efficient and more effective. From 2004 to 2006, voucher funds were allocated using a series of

ineffectual formulas that gave some agencies less funding than they needed to cover the costs of their vouchers—forcing them to cut back for needy families—while other agencies were given more funds than they could use. This resulted in $1.4 billion of unused funds and, more importantly, 150,000 more low-income families without vouchers. SERVA would base funding on the actual cost of each agency's vouchers in the previous year. This will allow housing agencies, apartment owners, and families with vouchers to be confident that the program will be funded on a regular basis. Moreover, SERVA will establish incentives encouraging agencies to serve as many families as their funding permits, rather than accumulating large balances of unspent funds.

In addition to establishing such a stable, efficient and equitable voucher funding policy, SERVA will additionally remove barriers to voucher ''portability'', as well as streamline the rules for determining tenants' rent payment. It will authorize 100,000 new vouchers over five years' time, and include provisions to encourage economic self-sufficiency. It will also allow families to use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase, gives a limited number of Public Housing Agencies some flexibility to experiment with development and rent policies, and makes it easier for housing agencies to attach vouchers to housing units. These reforms will provide vital rental assistance for seniors and the disabled as well as low-income families, as well as provide a welcome opportunity for low-income families to achieve the American Dream of home ownership.

By reforming an already highly successful program, we can improve the quality of life for many American families, elderly, and disabled citizen all over the country by offering them more and better choices of communities to live in.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Madam Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1851, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.

I want to take this opportunity to commend my good friend Congresswoman MAXINE WATERS, chairwoman of the Housing Subcommittee, for introducing this bill, navigating it through the House Committee on Financial Services and bringing this important and necessary piece of legislation to the floor today for consideration by the full House of Representatives.

I have the utmost respect for Chairwoman WATERS—for all that she has done and is doing to improve the housing conditions for Americans, especially the moderate- to low-income, minorities, the disabled and the elderly. She has helped me considerably in my efforts to improve housing conditions in rural America.

Mr. Chairman, while some form of Section 8 rental assistance has been in place since the mid-1970s, the modern program was shaped largely by the 1998 public housing reform act. Nearly 10 years later, the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program came under new scrutiny, with Public Housing Authority industry leaders, low-income housing advocates, and some Members of Congress calling for reforms.

Chairwoman WATERS heeded that call and has brought to the floor today a bill that will help not only the poorest of the poor with housing vouchers but also provide the public housing authorities in my district and across the nation with the tools they need to better serve our constituents. The bill includes significant improvements to the voucher program, which provides rental assistance to about 1.8 million families, the majority of whom are extremely poor.

Applaud the provision in the bill that permits public housing authorities to let families use housing vouchers as a down payment on a first-time home purchase, and the section authorizing 20,000 sorely needed incremental vouchers in each of the next 5 years, for a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

For these reasons and more, I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1851, the ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.''

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Chairman, I regret that I will be unable to vote ''yes'' tonight for passage of H.R. 1851. I was scheduled to be in Detroit in order to receive the NAACP's most prestigious award, the ''Spingarn award.'' I applaud the vision, courage and compassion of Representative MAXINE WATERS for introducing the ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, H.R. 1851.'' I strongly support the legislation, because it expands Section 8 vouchers for working families in America who are in desperate need of affordable housing by creating 20,000 incremental Section 8 vouchers in each of the next 5 years for a total of 100,000 new vouchers.

In a nation where affordable housing is scarce, and family homeless shelters continue to be built across the nation, passage of H.R. 1851 is a vitally important step in having the Federal Government take the lead in expanding affordable housing for deserving families and children in America. There are approximately 16,000 individuals and families who are currently on the Detroit Public Housing Waiting List. H.R. 1851 will help reduce the affordable housing crisis in Detroit, by increasing the availability of housing units through the expansion of Section 8 housing. It clearly does not make sense, nor is it fair, to have apartments available for rent in Detroit, but not enough citizens to move into them, only because there have not been a sufficient supply of Section 8 vouchers in the past.

H.R. 1851 also changes rent calculation, recertification, and inspection rules for the voucher, public housing, and project based Section 8 programs, to reduce costs and compliance burdens for public housing agencies, landlords, and families. These changes are made while maintaining rules that target scarce resources to those families most in need and while maintaining rent calculation rules that ensure rents are affordable. This will mean that Section 8 apartments will now become more affordable due to changes in rent calculation formulas mandated in H.R. 1851.

H.R. 1851 also permits public housing agencies across this country to allow families in need of affordable housing to use a Section 8 housing voucher as a down payment on a first time home purchase. Passage of this legislation means scores of working families in Detroit, many who have saved and sacrificed the entire lives to buy a home, will be now able to do so.

The ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, H.R. 1851.'' Is a critically important piece of legislation because it reforms HUD Section 8 guidelines to ensure that the approximately $1.4 billion in unused Section 8 funds will now be spent. This legislation mandates reforms in the Section 8 program that will eliminate inefficiencies, streamline paper work, and provide more incentives for public housing agencies to assist more families who qualify for Section 8 housing.

Having an additional $1.4 billion dollars to be used for Section 8 housing vouchers means that there will be a substantial increase in families in Detroit who will live in safe and decent affordable housing. There are too many working families in Detroit, and across this nation, who are living in homeless shelters, expensive inner city hotels, and staying with friends and relatives until they can locate housing. This is a moral outrage. All Americans deserve safe, decent, and affordable permanent housing.

Under the leadership of Representative MAXINE WATERS, passage of H.R. 1851 shows how we as Democrats have always had a historical commitment to expanding affordable housing to working families, and will continue to do so.

If we are to be a truly compassionate and moral nation, all individuals and families, regardless of income, race, or employment status must have as a fundamental human and civil right safe, decent, and affordable housing. Passage of H.R. 1851 is a critically important piece of legislation that will move America closer to this goal. Now, 100,000 additional Americans will have the opportunity to either become home owners, or move into an apartment, something that we can all agree on should be one of the highest priorities of this Nation.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN (Ms. BALDWIN). All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the amendment in the nature of a substitute printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the 5-minute rule and shall be considered read.

The text of the committee amendment is as follows:

H.R. 1851

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007''.

SEC. 2. INSPECTION OF DWELLING UNITS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8(o)(8) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(8)) is amended—

(1) by striking subparagraph (A) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(A) INITIAL INSPECTION.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—For each dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payment contract is established under this subsection, the public housing agency (or other entity pursuant to paragraph (11)) shall inspect the unit before any assistance payment is made to determine whether the dwelling unit meets the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), except as provided in clause (ii) or (iii) of this subparagraph.

''(ii) CORRECTION OF NON-LIFE THREATENING CONDITIONS.—In the case of any dwelling unit that is determined, pursuant to an inspection under clause (i), not to meet the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), assistance payments may be made for the unit notwithstanding subparagraph (C) if failure to meet such standards is a result only of non-life threatening conditions. A public housing agency

making assistance payments pursuant to this clause for a dwelling unit shall, 30 days after the beginning of the period for which such payments are made, suspend any assistance payments for the unit if any deficiency resulting in noncompliance with the housing quality standards has not been corrected by such time, and may not resume such payments until each such deficiency has been corrected.

''(iii) PROJECTS RECEIVING CERTAIN FEDERAL HOUSING SUBSIDIES.—In the case of any property that within the previous 12 months has been determined to meet housing quality and safety standards under any Federal housing program inspection standard, including the program under section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or under subtitle A of title II of the Cranston Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, a public housing agency may authorize occupancy before the inspection under clause (i) has been completed, and may make assistance payments retroactive to the beginning of the lease term after the unit has been determined pursuant to an inspection under clause (i) to meet the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B).'';

(2) by striking subparagraph (D) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(D) BIENNIAL INSPECTIONS.—

''(i) REQUIREMENT.—Each public housing agency providing assistance under this subsection (or other entity, as provided in paragraph (11)) shall, for each assisted dwelling unit, make biennial inspections during the term of the housing assistance payments contract for the unit to determine whether the unit is maintained in accordance with the requirements under subparagraph (A). The agency (or other entity) shall retain the records of the inspection for a reasonable time and shall make the records available upon request to the Secretary, the Inspector General for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and any auditor conducting an audit under section 5(h).

''(ii) SUFFICIENT INSPECTION.—An inspection of a property shall be sufficient to comply with the inspection requirement under clause (i) if—

''(I) the inspection was conducted pursuant to requirements under a Federal, State, or local housing assistance program (including the HOME investment partnerships program under title II of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 12721 et seq.)); and

''(II) pursuant to such inspection, the property was determined to meet the standards or requirements regarding housing quality or safety applicable to units assisted under such program, and, if a non-Federal standard was used, the public housing agency has certified to the Secretary that such standards or requirements provide the same protection to occupants of dwelling units meeting such standards or requirements as, or greater protection than, the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B).''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(F) ENFORCEMENT OF HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS.—

''(i) DETERMINATION OF NONCOMPLIANCE.—A dwelling unit that is covered by a housing assistance payments contract under this subsection shall be considered, for purposes of this subparagraph, to be in noncompliance with the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B) if—

''(I) the public housing agency or an inspector authorized by the State or unit of local government determines upon inspection of the unit that the unit fails to comply with such standards;

''(II) the agency or inspector notifies the owner of the unit in writing of such failure to comply; and

''(III) the failure to comply is not corrected within 90 days after receipt of such notice.

''(ii) WITHHOLDING AND RELEASE OF ASSISTANCE AMOUNTS.—The public housing agency shall withhold all of the assistance amounts under this subsection with respect to a dwelling unit that is in noncompliance with housing quality standards under subparagraph (B). Subject to clause (iii), the agency shall promptly release any withheld amounts to the owner of the dwelling unit upon completion of repairs that remedy such noncompliance.

''(iii) USE OF WITHHELD ASSISTANCE TO PAY FOR REPAIRS.—The public housing agency may use such amounts withheld to make repairs to the dwelling unit or to contract to have repairs made (or to contract with an inspector referred to in clause (i)(I) to make or contract for such repairs), and shall subtract the cost of such repairs from any amounts released to the owner of the unit upon remedying such noncompliance.

''(iv) PROTECTION OF TENANTS.—An owner of a dwelling unit may not terminate the tenancy of any tenant or refuse to renew a lease for such unit because of the withholding of assistance pursuant to this subparagraph.

''(v) TERMINATION OF LEASE OR ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS CONTRACT.—If assistance amounts under this section for a dwelling unit are withheld pursuant to clause (ii) and the owner does not correct the noncompliance before the expiration of the lease for the dwelling unit and such lease is not renewed, the Secretary shall recapture any such amounts from the public housing agency.

''(vi) APPLICABILITY.—This subparagraph shall apply to any dwelling unit for which a housing assistance payments contract is entered into or renewed after the date of the effectiveness of the regulations implementing this subparagraph.''.

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall issue any regulations necessary to carry out the amendment made by subsection (a)(3) not later than the expiration of the 12-month period beginning upon the date of the enactment of this Act. Such regulations shall take effect not later than the expiration of the 90-day period beginning upon such issuance. This subsection shall take effect upon enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. RENT REFORM AND INCOME REVIEWS.

(a) RENT FOR PUBLIC HOUSING AND SECTION 8 PROGRAMS.—Section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(a)) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1) by inserting ''LOW-INCOME OCCUPANCY REQUIREMENT AND RENTAL PAYMENTS.—'' after ''(1)''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(6) REVIEWS OF FAMILY INCOME.—

''(A) FREQUENCY.—Reviews of family income for purposes of this section shall be made—

''(i) in the case of all families, upon the initial provision of housing assistance for the family;

''(ii) annually thereafter, except as provided in subparagraph (B)(i);

''(iii) upon the request of the family, at any time the income or deductions (under subsection (b)(5)) of the family change by an amount that is estimated to result in a decrease of $1,500 (or such lower amount as the public housing agency may, at the option of the agency or owner, establish) or more in annual adjusted income; and

''(iv) at any time the income or deductions (under subsection (b)(5)) of the family change by an amount that is estimated to result in an increase of $1,500 or more in annual adjusted income, except that any increase in the earned income of a family shall not be considered for purposes of this clause (except that earned income may be considered if the increase corresponds to previous decreases under clause (iii)), except that a public housing agency or owner may elect not to conduct such review in the last three months of a certification period.

''(B) FIXED-INCOME FAMILIES.—

''(i) SELF CERTIFICATION AND 3-YEAR REVIEW.—In the case of any family described in clause (ii), after the initial review of the family's income pursuant to subparagraph (A)(i), the public housing agency or owner shall not be required to conduct a review of the family's income pursuant to subparagraph (A)(ii) for any year for which such family certifies, in accordance with such requirements as the Secretary shall establish, that the income of the family meets the requirements of clause (ii) of this subparagraph, except that the public housing agency or owner shall conduct a review of each such family's income not less than once every 3 years.

''(ii) ELIGIBLE FAMILIES.—A family described in this clause is a family who has an income, as of the most recent review pursuant to subparagraph (A) or clause (i) of this subparagraph, of which 90 percent or more consists of fixed income, as such term is defined in clause (iii).

''(iii) FIXED INCOME.—For purposes of this subparagraph, the term 'fixed income' includes income from—

''(I) the supplemental security income program under title XVI of the Social Security Act, including supplementary payments pursuant to an agreement for Federal administration under section 1616(a) of the Social Security Act and payments pursuant to an agreement entered into under section 212(b) of Public Law 93–66;

''(II) Social Security payments;

''(III) Federal, State, local and private pension plans; and

''(IV) other periodic payments received from annuities, insurance policies, retirement funds, disability or death benefits, and other similar types of periodic receipts.

''(C) IN GENERAL.—Reviews of family income for purposes of this section shall be subject to the provisions of section 904 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1988.

''(7) CALCULATION OF INCOME.—

''(A) USE OF PRIOR YEAR'S INCOME.—Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph, in determining the income of a family for a year, a public housing agency or owner may use the income of the family as determined by the agency or owner for the preceding year, taking into consideration any redetermination of income during such prior year pursuant to clause (iii) or (iv) of paragraph (6)(A).

''(B) EARNED INCOME.—For purposes of this section, the earned income of a family for a year shall be the amount of earned income by the family in the prior year minus an amount equal to 10 percent of the lesser of such prior year's earned income or $10,000, except that the income of a family for purposes of section 16 (relating to eligibility for assisted housing and income mix) shall be determined without regard to any reduction under this subparagraph.

''(C) INFLATIONARY ADJUSTMENT FOR FIXED INCOME FAMILIES.—If, for any year, a public housing agency or owner determines the income for any family described in paragraph (6)(B)(ii), or the amount of fixed income of any other family, based on the prior year's income or fixed income, respectively, pursuant to subparagraph (A), such prior year's income or fixed income, respectively, shall be adjusted by applying an inflationary factor as the Secretary shall, by regulation, establish.

''(D) OTHER INCOME.—If, for any year, a public housing agency or owner determines the income for any family based on the prior year's income, with respect to prior year calculations of types of income not subject to subparagraph (B), a public housing agency or owner may make other adjustments as it considers appropriate to reflect current income.

''(E) SAFE HARBOR.—A public housing agency or owner may, to the extent such information is available to the public housing agency or owner, determine the family's income for purposes of this section based on timely income determinations made for purposes of other means-tested Federal public assistance programs (including the program for block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families

under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, a program for medicaid assistance under a State plan approved under title XIX of the Social Security Act, and the food stamp program as defined in section 3(h) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977. The Secretary shall, in consultation with other appropriate Federal agencies, develop procedures to enable public housing agencies and owners to have access to such income determinations made by other Federal programs.

''(F) PHA AND OWNER COMPLIANCE.—A public housing agency or owner may not be considered to fail to comply with this paragraph or paragraph (6) due solely to any de minimus errors made by the agency or owner in calculating family incomes.'';

(2) by striking subsections (d) and (e); and

(3) by redesignating subsection (f) as subsection (d).

(b) INCOME.—Section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following new paragraph:

''(4) INCOME.—The term 'income' means, with respect to a family, income received from all sources by each member of the household who is 18 years of age or older or is the head of household or spouse of the head of the household, plus unearned income by or on behalf of each dependent who is less than 18 years of age, as determined in accordance with criteria prescribed by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, subject to the following requirements:

''(A) INCLUDED AMOUNTS.—Such term includes recurring gifts and receipts, actual income from assets, and profit or loss from a business.

''(B) EXCLUDED AMOUNTS.—Such term does not include—

''(i) any imputed return on assets; and

''(ii) any amounts that would be eligible for exclusion under section 1613(a)(7) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382b(a)(7)).

''(C) EARNED INCOME OF STUDENTS.—Such term does not include earned income of any dependent earned during any period that such dependent is attending school on a full-time basis or any grant-in-aid or scholarship amounts related to such attendance used for the cost of tuition or books.

''(D) EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.—Income shall be determined without regard to any amounts in or from, or any benefits from, any Coverdell education savings account under section 530 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any qualified tuition program under section 529 of such Code.

''(E) OTHER EXCLUSIONS.—Such term shall not include other exclusions from income as are established by the Secretary or any amount required by Federal law to be excluded from consideration as income. The Secretary may not require a public housing agency or owner to maintain records of any amounts excluded from income pursuant to this subparagraph.''; and

(2) by striking paragraph (5) and inserting the following new paragraph:

''(5) ADJUSTED INCOME.—The term 'adjusted income' means, with respect to a family, the amount (as determined by the public housing agency or owner) of the income of the members of the family residing in a dwelling unit or the persons on a lease, after any deductions from income as follows:

''(A) ELDERLY AND DISABLED FAMILIES.—$725 in the case of any family that is an elderly family or a disabled family.

''(B) DEPENDENTS.—In the case of any family that includes a member or members who—

''(i) are less than 18 years of age or attending school or vocational training on a full-time basis; or

''(ii) is a person with disabilities who is 18 years of age or older and resides in the household,

$500 for each such member.

''(C) HEALTH AND MEDICAL EXPENSES.—The amount, if any, by which 10 percent of annual family income is exceeded by the sum of—

''(i) in the case of any elderly or disabled family, any unreimbursed health and medical care expenses; and

''(ii) any unreimbursed reasonable attendant care and auxiliary apparatus expenses for each handicapped member of the family, to the extent necessary to enable any member of such family to be employed.

''(D) PERMISSIVE DEDUCTIONS.—Such additional deductions as a public housing agency may, at its discretion, establish, except that the Secretary shall establish procedures to ensure that such deductions do not increase Federal expenditures.

The Secretary shall annually adjust the amounts of the exclusions under subparagraphs (A) and (B), as such amounts may have been previously adjusted, by applying an inflationary factor as the Secretary shall, by regulation, establish. If the dollar amount of any such exclusion determined for any year by applying such inflationary factor is not a multiple of $25, the Secretary shall round such amount to the next lowest multiple of $25.''.

(c) HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM.—Paragraph (5) of section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(5)) is amended—

(1) in the paragraph heading, by striking ''ANNUAL REVIEW'' and inserting ''REVIEWS'';

(2) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) by striking ''the provisions of'' and inserting ''paragraphs (6) and (7) of section 3(a) and to''; and

(B) by striking ''and shall be conducted upon the initial provision of housing assistance for the family and thereafter not less than annually''; and

(3) in subparagraph (B), by striking the second sentence.

(d) ENHANCED VOUCHER PROGRAM.—Section 8(t)(1)(D) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(t)(1)(D)) is amended by striking ''income'' each place such term appears and inserting ''annual adjusted income''.

(e) PROJECT-BASED HOUSING.—Paragraph (3) of section 8(c) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(3)) is amended by striking the last sentence.

(f) IMPACT ON PUBLIC HOUSING REVENUES.—

(1) INTERACTION WITH ASSET MANAGEMENT RULE.—If the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development determines that the application of the amendments made by this section results in a reduction in the rental income of a public housing agency that is not de minimus during the period that the operating formula income is frozen at a level that does not fully reflect the changes made by such amendments, the Secretary shall make appropriate adjustments in the formula income of the agency.

(2) HUD REPORTS ON PUBLIC HOUSING REVENUE IMPACT.—For each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall submit a report to Congress identifying and calculating the impact of changes made by the amendments made by this section on the revenues and costs of operating public housing units.

(g) EFFECTIVE DATE AND TRANSITION.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to fiscal year 2008 and fiscal years thereafter.

SEC. 4. ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE BASED ON ASSETS AND INCOME.

(a) ASSETS.—Section 16 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n) is amended by inserting after subsection (d) the following new subsection:

''(e) ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE BASED ON ASSETS.—

''(1) LIMITATION ON ASSETS.—Subject to paragraph (3) and notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, a dwelling unit assisted under this Act may not be rented and assistance under this Act may not be provided, either initially or at each recertification of family income, to any family—

''(A) whose net family assets exceed $100,000, as such amount is adjusted annually by applying an inflationary factor as the Secretary considers appropriate; or

''(B) who has a present ownership interest in, and a legal right to reside in, real property that is suitable for occupancy as a residence, except that the prohibition under this subparagraph shall not apply to—

''(i) any property for which the family is receiving assistance under this Act;

''(ii) any person that is a victim of domestic violence; or

''(iii) any family that is making a good faith effort to sell such property.

''(2) NET FAMILY ASSETS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this subsection, the term 'net family assets' means, for all members of the household, the net cash value of all assets after deducting reasonable costs that would be incurred in disposing of real property, savings, stocks, bonds, and other forms of capital investment. Such term does not include interests in Indian trust land, equity accounts in homeownership programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, or Family Self Sufficiency accounts.

''(B) EXCLUSIONS.—Such term does not include—

''(i) the value of personal property, except for items of personal property of significant value, as the public housing agency may determine;

''(ii) the value of any retirement account;

''(iii) any amounts recovered in any civil action or settlement based on a claim of malpractice, negligence, or other breach of duty owed to a member of the family and arising out of law, that resulted in a member of the family being disabled (under the meaning given such term in section 1614 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382c)); and

''(iv) the value of any Coverdell education savings account under section 530 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any qualified tuition program under section 529 of such Code.

''(C) TRUST FUNDS.—In cases where a trust fund has been established and the trust is not revocable by, or under the control of, any member of the family or household, the value of the trust fund shall not be considered an asset of a family if the fund continues to be held in trust. Any income distributed from the trust fund shall be considered income for purposes of section 3(b) and any calculations of annual family income, except in the case of medical expenses for a minor.

''(D) SELF-CERTIFICATION.—A public housing agency or owner may determine the net assets of a family, for purposes of this section, based on the amounts reported by the family at the time the agency or owner reviews the family's income.

''(3) COMPLIANCE FOR PUBLIC HOUSING DWELLING UNITS.—When recertifying family income with respect to families residing in public housing dwelling units, a public housing agency may, in the discretion of the agency and only pursuant to a policy that is set forth in the public housing agency plan under section 5A for the agency, choose not to enforce the limitation under paragraph (1).

''(4) AUTHORITY TO DELAY EVICTIONS.—In the case of a family residing in a dwelling unit assisted under this Act who does not comply with the limitation under paragraph (1), the public housing agency or project owner may delay eviction or termination of the family based on such noncompliance for a period of not more than 6 months.''.

(b) INCOME.—The United States Housing Act of 1937 is amended—

(1) in section 3(a)(1) (42 U.S.C. 1437a(a)(1)), by striking the first sentence and inserting the following: ''Dwelling units assisted under this Act

may be rented, and assistance under this Act may be provided, whether initially or at time of recertification, only to families who are low-income families at the time such initial or continued assistance, respectively, is provided, except that families residing in dwelling units as of the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 that, under agreements in effect on such date of enactment, may have incomes up to 95 percent of local area median income shall continue to be eligible for assistance at recertification as long as they continue to comply with such income restrictions. When recertifying family income with respect to families residing in public housing dwelling units, a public housing agency may, in the discretion of the agency and only pursuant to a policy that is set forth in the public housing agency plan under section 5A for the agency, choose not to enforce the prohibition under the preceding sentence. When recertifying family income with respect to families residing in dwelling units for which project-based assistance is provided, a project owner may, in the owner's discretion and only pursuant to a policy adopted by such owner, choose not to enforce such prohibition. In the case of a family residing in a dwelling unit assisted under this Act who does not comply with the prohibition under the first sentence of this paragraph, the public housing agency or project owner may delay eviction or termination of the family based on such noncompliance for a period of not more than 6 months.'';

(2) in section 8(o)(4) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(4)), by striking the matter preceding subparagraph (A) and inserting the following:

''(4) ELIGIBLE FAMILIES.—Assistance under this subsection may be provided, whether initially or at each recertification, only pursuant to subsection (t) to a family eligible for assistance under such subsection or to a family who at the time of such initial or continued assistance, respectively, is a low-income family that is—''; and

(3) in section 8(c)(4) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(4)), by striking ''at the time it initially occupied such dwelling unit'' and inserting ''according to the restrictions under section 3(a)(1)''.

SEC. 5. TARGETING ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME WORKING FAMILIES.

(a) VOUCHERS.—Section 16(b)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after ''do not exceed'' the following: ''the higher of (A) the poverty line (as such term is defined in section 673 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902), including any revision required by such section) applicable to a family of the size involved, or (B)''; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''; and except that clause (A) of this sentence shall not apply in the case of families residing in Puerto Rico or any other territory or possession of the United States''.

(b) PUBLIC HOUSING.—Section 16(a)(2)(A) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n(a)(2)(A)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after ''do not exceed'' the following: ''the higher of (i) the poverty line (as such term is defined in section 673 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902), including any revision required by such section) applicable to a family of the size involved, or (ii)''; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''; and except that clause (i) of this sentence shall not apply in the case of families residing in Puerto Rico or any other territory or possession of the United States''.

(c) PROJECT-BASED SECTION 8 ASSISTANCE.—Section 16(c)(3) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n(c)(3)) is amended—

(1) by inserting after ''do not exceed'' the following: ''the higher of (A) the poverty line (as such term is defined in section 673 of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902), including any revision required by such section) applicable to a family of the size involved, or (B)''; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''; and except that clause (A) of this sentence shall not apply in the case of families residing in Puerto Rico or any other territory or possession of the United States''.

SEC. 6. VOUCHER RENEWAL FUNDING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) is amended by striking subsection (dd) and inserting the following new subsection:

''(dd) TENANT-BASED VOUCHERS.—

''(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated, for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012, such sums as may be necessary for tenant-based assistance under subsection (o) for the following purposes:

''(A) To renew all expiring annual contributions contracts for tenant-based rental assistance.

''(B) To provide tenant-based rental assistance for—

''(i) relocation and replacement of housing units that are demolished or disposed of pursuant to the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–134);

''(ii) conversion of section 23 projects to assistance under this section;

''(iii) the family unification program under subsection (x) of this section;

''(iv) relocation of witnesses in connection with efforts to combat crime in public and assisted housing pursuant to a request from a law enforcement or prosecution agency;

''(v) enhanced vouchers authorized under subsection (t) of this section;

''(vi) vouchers in connection with the HOPE VI program under section 24;

''(vii) demolition or disposition of public housing units pursuant to section 18 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437p);

''(viii) mandatory and voluntary conversions of public housing to vouchers, pursuant to sections 33 and 22 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, respectively (42 U.S.C. 1437z–5, 1437t);

''(ix) vouchers necessary to comply with a consent decree or court order;

''(x) vouchers to replace dwelling units that cease to receive project-based assistance under subsection (b), (c), (d), (e), or (v) of this section;

''(xi) tenant protection assistance, including replacement and relocation assistance; and

''(xii) emergency voucher assistance for the protection of victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Subject only to the availability of sufficient amounts provided in appropriation Acts, the Secretary shall provide tenant-based rental assistance to replace all dwelling units that cease to be available as assisted housing as a result of clause (i), (ii), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii), or (x).

''(2) ALLOCATION OF RENEWAL FUNDING AMONG PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES.—

''(A) From amounts appropriated for each year pursuant to paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall provide renewal funding for each public housing agency—

''(i) based on leasing and cost data from the preceding calendar year, as adjusted by an annual adjustment factor to be established by the Secretary, which shall be established using the smallest geographical areas for which data on changes in rental costs are annually available;

''(ii) by making any adjustments necessary to provide for the first-time renewal of vouchers funded under paragraph (1)(B);

''(iii) by making any adjustments necessary for full year funding of vouchers ported in the prior calendar year under subsection (r)(2); and

''(iv) by making such other adjustments as the Secretary considers appropriate, including adjustments necessary to address changes in voucher utilization rates and voucher costs related to natural and other major disasters.

''(B) LEASING AND COST DATA.—For purposes of subparagraph (A)(i), leasing and cost data shall be calculated annually by using the average for the preceding calendar year. Such leasing and cost data shall be adjusted to include vouchers that were set aside under a commitment to provide project-based assistance under subsection (o)(13) and to exclude amounts funded through advances under paragraph (3). Such leasing and cost data shall not include funds not appropriated for tenant-based assistance under section 8(o), unless the agency's funding was prorated in the prior year and the agency used other funds to maintain vouchers in use.

''(C) OVERLEASING.—For the purpose of determining allocations under subsection (A)(i), the leasing rate calculated for the prior calendar year may exceed an agency's authorized voucher level, except that such calculation in 2009 shall not include amounts resulting from a leasing rate in excess of 103 percent of an agency's authorized vouchers in 2008 which results from the use of accumulated amounts, as referred to in paragraph (4)(A).

''(D) MOVING TO WORK; HOUSING INNOVATION PROGRAM.—Notwithstanding subparagraphs (A) and (B), each public housing agency participating at any time in the moving to work demonstration under section 204 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note) or in the housing innovation program under section 36 of this Act shall be funded pursuant to its agreement under such program and shall be subject to any pro rata adjustment made under subparagraph (E)(i).

''(E) PRO RATA ALLOCATION.—

''(i) INSUFFICIENT FUNDS.—To the extent that amounts made available for a fiscal year are not sufficient to provide each public housing agency with the full allocation for the agency determined pursuant to subparagraphs (A) and (D), the Secretary shall reduce such allocation for each agency on a pro rata basis, except that renewal funding of enhanced vouchers under section 8(t) shall not be subject to such proration.

''(ii) EXCESS FUNDS.—To the extent that amounts made available for a fiscal year exceed the amount necessary to provide each housing agency with the full allocation for the agency determined pursuant to subparagraphs (A) and (D), such excess amounts shall be used for the purposes specified in subparagraphs (B) and (C) of paragraph (4).

''(F) PROMPT FUNDING ALLOCATION.—The Secretary shall allocate all funds under this subsection for each year before the latter of (i) February 15, or (ii) the expiration of the 45-day period beginning upon the enactment of the appropriations Act funding such renewals.

''(3) ADVANCES.—

''(A) AUTHORITY.—During the last 3 months of each calendar year, the Secretary shall provide amounts to any public housing agency, at the request of the agency, in an amount up to two percent of the allocation for the agency for such calendar year, subject to subparagraph (C).

''(B) USE.—Amounts advanced under subparagraph (A) may be used to pay for additional voucher costs, including costs related to temporary overleasing.

''(C) USE OF PRIOR YEAR AMOUNTS.—During the last 3 months of a calendar year, if amounts previously provided to a public housing agency for tenant-based assistance for such year or for previous years remain unobligated and available to the agency—

''(i) the agency shall exhaust such amounts to cover any additional voucher costs under subparagraph (B) before amounts advanced under subparagraph (A) may be so used; and

''(ii) the amount that may be advanced under subparagraph (A) to the agency shall be reduced by an amount equal to the total of such previously provided and unobligated amounts.

''(D) REPAYMENT.—Amounts advanced under subparagraph (A) in a calendar year shall be repaid to the Secretary in the subsequent calendar

year by reducing the amounts made available for such agency for such subsequent calendar year pursuant to allocation under paragraph (2) by an amount equal to the amount so advanced to the agency.

''(4) RECAPTURE.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall recapture, from amounts provided under the annual contributions contract for a public housing agency for a calendar year, all accumulated amounts allocated under paragraph (2) and from previous years that are unused by the agency at the end of each calendar year except—

''(i) with respect to the recapture under this subparagraph at the end of 2007, an amount equal to one twelfth the amount allocated to the public housing agency for such year pursuant to paragraph (2)(A); and

''(ii) with respect to the recapture under this subparagraph at the end of each of 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, an amount equal to 5 percent of such amount allocated to the agency for such year. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each public housing agency may retain all amounts not authorized to be recaptured under this subparagraph, and may use such amounts for all authorized purposes.

''(B) REALLOCATION.—Not later than May 1 of each calendar year, the Secretary shall—

''(i) calculate the aggregate unused amounts for the preceding year recaptured pursuant to subparagraph (A);

''(ii) set aside and make available such amounts as the Secretary considers appropriate to reimburse public housing agencies for increased costs related to portability and family self-sufficiency activities during such year; and

''(iii) reallocate all remaining amounts among public housing agencies, with priority given based on the extent to which an agency has utilized the amount allocated under paragraph (2) for the agency to serve eligible families.

''(C) USE.—Amounts reallocated to a public housing agency pursuant to subparagraph (B)(iii) may be used only to increase voucher leasing rates as provided under paragraph (2)(C).''.

(b) ABSORPTION OF VOUCHERS FROM OTHER AGENCIES.—Section 8(r)(2) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(r)(2)) is amended by adding after the period at the end the following: ''The agency shall absorb the family into its program for voucher assistance under this section and shall have priority to receive additional funding from the Secretary for the housing assistance provided for such family from amounts made available pursuant to subsection (dd)(4)(B).''

(c) VOUCHERS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall develop and issue, to public housing agencies that received voucher assistance under section 8(o) for non-elderly disabled families pursuant to appropriations Acts for fiscal years 1997 through 2002, guidance to ensure that, to the maximum extent practicable, such vouchers continue to be provided upon turnover to qualified non-elderly disabled families.

SEC. 7. ADMINISTRATIVE FEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8(q) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(q)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking subparagraphs (B) and (C) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

''(B) CALCULATION.—The fee under this subsection shall—

''(i) be payable to each public housing agency for each month for which a dwelling unit is covered by an assistance contract;

''(ii) until superseded through subsequent rulemaking, be based on the per-unit fee payable to the agency in fiscal year 2003, updated for each subsequent year as specified in subsection (iv);

''(iii) include an amount for the cost of issuing voucher to new participants;

''(iv) be updated each year using an index of changes in wage data or other objectively measurable data that reflect the costs of administering the program for such assistance, as determined by the Secretary; and

''(v) include an amount for the cost of family self-sufficiency coordinators, as provided in section 23(h)(1).

''(C) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall cause to be published in the Federal Register the fee rate for each geographic area.''; and

(2) in paragraph (4), by striking ''1999'' and inserting ''2007''.

(b) ADMINISTRATIVE FEES FOR FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM COSTS.—Subsection (h) of section 23 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437u(h)) is amended by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraph:

''(1) SECTION 8 FEES.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a fee under section 8(q) for the costs incurred in administering the self-sufficiency program under this section to assist families receiving voucher assistance through section 8(o).

''(B) ELIGIBILITY FOR FEE.—The fee shall provide funding for family self-sufficiency coordinators as follows:

''(i) BASE FEE.—A public housing agency serving 25 or more participants in the family self-sufficiency program under this section shall receive a fee equal to the costs of employing one full-time family self-sufficiency coordinator. An agency serving fewer than 25 such participants shall receive a prorated fee.

''(ii) ADDITIONAL FEE.—An agency that meets minimum performance standards shall receive an additional fee sufficient to cover the costs of employing a second family self-sufficiency coordinator if the agency has 75 or more participating families, and a third such coordinator if it has 125 or more participating families.

''(iii) PREVIOUSLY FUNDED AGENCIES.—An agency that received funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for more than three such coordinators in any of fiscal years 1998 through 2007 shall receive funding for the highest number of coordinators funded in a single fiscal year during that period, provided they meet applicable size and performance standards.

''(iv) INITIAL YEAR.—For the first year in which a public housing agency exercises its right to develop an family self-sufficiency program for its residents, it shall be entitled to funding to cover the costs of up to one family self-sufficiency coordinator, based on the size specified in its action plan for such program.

''(v) STATE AND REGIONAL AGENCIES.—For purposes of calculating the family self-sufficiency portion of the administrative fee under this subparagraph, each administratively distinct part of a State or regional public housing agency shall be treated as a separate agency.

''(vi) DETERMINATION OF NUMBER OF COORDINATORS.—In determining whether a public housing agency meets a specific threshold for funding pursuant to this paragraph, the number of participants being served by the agency in its family self-sufficiency program shall be considered to be the average number of families enrolled in such agency's program during the course of the most recent fiscal year for which the Department of Housing and Urban Development has data.

''(C) PRORATION.—If insufficient funds are available in any fiscal year to fund all of the coordinators authorized under this section, the first priority shall be given to funding one coordinator at each agency with an existing family self-sufficiency program. The remaining funds shall be prorated based on the number of remaining coordinators to which each agency is entitled under this subparagraph.

''(D) RECAPTURE.—Any fees allocated under this subparagraph by the Secretary in a fiscal year that have not been spent by the end of the subsequent fiscal year shall be recaptured by the Secretary and shall be available for providing additional fees pursuant to subparagraph (B)(ii).

''(E) PERFORMANCE STANDARDS.—Within six months after the date of the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary shall publish a proposed rule specifying the performance standards applicable to funding under clauses (ii) and (iii) of subparagraph (B). Such standards shall include requirements applicable to the leveraging of in-kind services and other resources to support the goals of the family self-sufficiency program.

''(F) DATA COLLECTION.—Public housing agencies receiving funding under this paragraph shall collect and report to the Secretary, in such manner as the Secretary shall require, information on the performance of their family self-sufficiency programs.

''(G) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall conduct a formal and scientific evaluation of the effectiveness of well-run family self-sufficiency programs, using random assignment of participants to the extent practicable. Not later than the expiration of the 4-year period beginning upon the enactment of this paragraph, the Secretary shall submit an interim evaluation report to the Congress. Not later than the expiration of the 8-year period beginning upon such enactment, the Secretary shall submit a final evaluation report to the Congress. There is authorized to be appropriated $10,000,000 to carry out the evaluation under this subparagraph.

''(H) INCENTIVES FOR INNOVATION AND HIGH PERFORMANCE.—The Secretary may reserve up to 10 percent of the amounts made available for administrative fees under this paragraph to provide support to or reward family self-sufficiency programs that are particularly innovative or highly successful in achieving the goals of the program.''.

(c) REPEAL.—Section 202 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note; Public Law 104–204; 110 Stat. 2893) is hereby repealed.

SEC. 8. HOMEOWNERSHIP.

(a) SECTION 8 HOMEOWNERSHIP DOWNPAYMENT PROGRAM.—Section 8(y)(7) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(y)(7)) is amended by striking subparagraphs (A) and (B) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to the provisions of this paragraph, in the case of a family on whose behalf rental assistance under section 8(o) has been provided for a period of not less than 12 months prior to the date of receipt of downpayment assistance under this paragraph, a public housing agency may, in lieu of providing monthly assistance payments under this subsection on behalf of a family eligible for such assistance and at the discretion of the agency, provide a downpayment assistance grant in accordance with subparagraph (B).

''(B) GRANT REQUIREMENTS.—A downpayment assistance grant under this paragraph—

''(i) shall be used by the family only as a contribution toward the downpayment and reasonable and customary closing costs required in connection with the purchase of a home;

''(ii) shall be in the form of a single one-time grant; and

''(iii) may not exceed $10,000.

''(C) NO EFFECT ON OBTAINING OUTSIDE SOURCES FOR DOWNPAYMENT ASSISTANCE.—This Act may not be construed to prohibit a public housing agency from providing downpayment assistance to families from sources other than a grant provided under this Act, or as determined by the public housing agency.''.

(b) USE OF VOUCHERS FOR MANUFACTURED HOUSING.—Section 8(o)(12) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(12) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking the period at the end of the first sentence and all that follows through ''of'' in the second sentence and inserting ''and rents''; and

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''the rent'' and all that follows and inserting the following: ''rent shall mean the sum of the monthly payments made by a family assisted under this paragraph to amortize the cost of purchasing the manufactured home, including any required insurance and property taxes, the monthly amount allowed for tenant-paid utilities, and the monthly rent charged for the real property on which the manufactured home is located, including monthly management and maintenance charges.'';

(B) by striking clause (ii); and

(C) in clause (iii)—

(i) by inserting after the period at the end the following: ''If the amount of the monthly assistance payment for a family exceeds the monthly rent charged for the real property on which the manufactured home is located, including monthly management and maintenance charges, a public housing agency may pay the remainder to the family, lender or utility company, or may choose to make a single payment to the family for the entire monthly assistance amount.''; and

(ii) by redesignating such clause as clause (ii).

SEC. 9. PHA REPORTING OF RENT PAYMENTS TO CREDIT REPORTING AGENCIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a), as amended by the preceding provisions of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e) PHA REPORTING OF RENT PAYMENTS TO CREDIT REPORTING AGENCIES.—

''(1) AUTHORITY.—To the extent that a family receiving tenant-based housing choice vouchers under section 8 by a public housing agency agrees in writing to reporting under this subsection, the public housing agency may submit to consumer reporting agencies described in section 603(p) of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. 1681a) information regarding the past rent payment history of the family with respect to the dwelling unit for which such assistance is provided.

''(2) FORMAT.—The Secretary, after consultation with consumer reporting agencies referred in paragraph (1), shall establish a system and format to be used by public housing agencies for reporting of information under such paragraph that provides such information in a format and manner that is similar to other credit information submitted to such consumer reporting agencies and is usable by such agencies.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 10. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS.

Section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(21) PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS.—

''(A) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall, by regulation, establish standards and procedures for assessing the performance of public housing agencies in carrying out the programs for tenant-based rental assistance under this subsection and for homeownership assistance under subsection (y).

''(B) CONTENTS.—The standards and procedures under this paragraph shall provide for assessment of the performance of public housing agencies in the following areas:

''(i) Quality of dwelling units obtained using such assistance.

''(ii) Extent of utilization of assistance amounts provided to the agency and of authorized vouchers.

''(iii) Timeliness and accuracy of reporting by the agency to the Secretary.

''(iv) Effectiveness in carrying out policies to achieve deconcentration of poverty.

''(v) Reasonableness of rent burdens, consistent with public housing agency responsibilities under section 8(o)(1)(E)(iii).

''(vi) Accurate rent calculations and subsidy payments.

''(vii) Effectiveness in carrying out family self-sufficiency activities.

''(viii) Timeliness of actions related to landlord participation.

''(ix) Such other areas as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(C) PERIODIC ASSESSMENT.—Using the standards and procedures established under this paragraph, the Secretary shall conduct an assessment of the performance of each public housing agency carrying out a program referred to in subparagraph (A) and shall submit a report to the Congress regarding the results of each such assessment.''.

SEC. 11. PHA PROJECT-BASED ASSISTANCE.

Section 8(o)(13) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(13)) is amended—

(1) by striking subparagraph (B) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(B) PERCENTAGE LIMITATION.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause (ii), not more than 25 percent of the funding available for tenant-based assistance under this section that is administered by the agency may be attached to structures pursuant to this paragraph.

''(ii) EXCEPTION.—An agency may attach up to an additional 5 percent of the funding available for tenant-based assistance under this section to structures pursuant to this paragraph for dwelling units that house individuals and families that meet the definition of homeless under section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302).'';

(2) by striking subparagraph (D) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(D) INCOME MIXING REQUIREMENT.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in clause (ii), not more than the greater of 25 dwelling units or 25 percent of the dwelling units in any project may be assisted under a housing assistance payment contract for project-based assistance pursuant to this paragraph. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term 'project' means a single building, multiple contiguous buildings, or multiple buildings on contiguous parcels of land.

''(ii) EXCEPTIONS.—

''(I) CERTAIN HOUSING.—The limitation under clause (i) shall not apply in the case of assistance under a contract for housing consisting of single family properties, or for dwelling units that are specifically made available for households comprised of elderly families, disabled families, and families receiving supportive services. For purposes of the preceding sentence, the term 'single family properties' means buildings with no more than four dwelling units.

''(II) CERTAIN AREAS.—With respect to areas in which fewer than 75 percent of families issued vouchers become participants in the program, the public housing agency has established the payment standard at 110 percent of the fair market rent for all census tracts in the area for the previous six months, and the public housing agency grants an automatic extension of 90 days (or longer) to families with vouchers who are attempting to find housing, clause (i) shall be applied by substituting '50 percent' for '25 percent'.'';

(3) in the first sentence of subparagraph (F), by striking ''10 years'' and inserting ''15 years'';

(4) in subparagraph (G)—

(A) by inserting after the period at the end of the first sentence the following: ''Such contract may, at the election of the public housing agency and the owner of the structure, specify that such contract shall be extended for renewal terms of up to 15 years each, if the agency makes the determination required by this subparagraph and the owner is in compliance with the terms of the contract.''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following: ''A public housing agency may agree to enter into such a contract at the time it enters into the initial agreement for a housing assistance payment contract or at any time thereafter that is before the expiration of the housing assistance payment contract.'';

(5) in subparagraph (H), by inserting before the period at the end of the first sentence the following: '', except that in the case of a contract unit that has been allocated low-income housing tax credits and for which the rent limitation pursuant to such section 42 is less than the amount that would otherwise be permitted under this subparagraph, the rent for such unit may, in the sole discretion of a public housing agency, be established at the higher section 8 rent, subject only to paragraph (10)(A)'';

(6) in subparagraph (I)(i), by inserting before the semicolon the following: '', except that the contract may provide that the maximum rent permitted for a dwelling unit shall not be less than the initial rent for the dwelling unit under the initial housing assistance payments contract covering the unit'';

(7) in subparagraph (J)—

(A) by striking the fifth and sixth sentences and inserting the following: ''A public housing agency may establish and utilize procedures for maintaining site-based waiting lists under which applicants may apply directly at, or otherwise designate to the public housing agency, the project or projects in which they seek to reside, except that all applicants on the waiting list of an agency for assistance under this subsection shall be permitted to place their names on such separate list. All such procedures shall comply with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, and other applicable civil rights laws. The owner or manager of a structure assisted under this paragraph shall not admit any family to a dwelling unit assisted under a contract pursuant to this paragraph other than a family referred by the public housing agency from its waiting list, or a family on a site-based waiting list that complies with the requirements of this subparagraph. A public housing agency shall fully disclose to each applicant each option in the selection of a project in which to reside that is available to the applicant.''; and

(B) by inserting after the third sentence the following new sentence: ''Any family who resides in a dwelling unit proposed to be assisted under this paragraph, or in a unit to be replaced by a proposed unit to be assisted under this paragraph shall be given an absolute preference for selection for placement in the proposed unit, if the family is otherwise eligible for assistance under this subsection.''; and

(8) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

''(L) USE IN COOPERATIVE HOUSING AND ELEVATOR BUILDINGS.—A public housing agency may enter into a housing assistance payments contract under this paragraph with respect to—

''(i) dwelling units in cooperative housing;

''(ii) notwithstanding subsection (c), dwelling units in a high-rise elevator project, including such a project that is occupied by families with children, without review and approval of the contract by the Secretary.

''(M) REVIEWS.—

''(i) SUBSIDY LAYERING.—A subsidy layering review in accordance with section 102(d) of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Reform Act of 1989 (42 U.S.C. 3545(d)) shall not be required for assistance under this subparagraph in the case of a housing assistance payments contract for an existing structure, or if a subsidy layering review has been conducted by the applicable State or local agency.

''(ii) ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW.—A public housing agency shall not be required to undertake any environmental review before entering into a housing assistance payments contract under this paragraph for an existing structure, except to the extent such a review is otherwise required by law or regulation.

''(N) LEASES AND TENANCY.—Assistance provided under this paragraph shall be subject to the provisions of paragraph (7), except that subparagraph (A) of such paragraph shall not apply.''.

SEC. 12. RENT BURDENS.

(a) REVIEWS.—Section 8(o)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(1)) is amended by striking subparagraph (E) and inserting the following new subparagraph:

''(E) REVIEWS.—

''(i) RENT BURDENS.—The Secretary shall monitor rent burdens and submit a report to the Congress annually on the percentage of families assisted under this subsection, occupying dwelling units of any size, that pay more than 30 percent of their adjusted incomes for rent and such percentage that pay more than 40 percent of their adjusted incomes for rent. Using information regularly reported by public housing agencies, the Secretary shall provide public housing agencies, on an annual basis, a report with the information described in the first sentence of this clause, and may require a public housing agency to modify a payment standard that results in a significant percentage of families assisted under this subsection, occupying dwelling units of any size, paying more than 30 percent of their adjusted incomes for rent.

''(ii) CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY.—The Secretary shall submit a report to the Congress annually on the degree to which families assisted under this subsection in each metropolitan area are clustered in lower rent, higher poverty areas and how, and the extent to which, greater geographic distribution of such assisted families could be achieved, including by increasing payment standards for particular communities within such metropolitan areas.

''(iii) PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES.—Each public housing agency shall make publicly available the information on rent burdens provided by the Secretary pursuant to clause (i), and, for agencies located in metropolitan areas, the information on concentration provided by the Secretary pursuant to clause (ii). If the percentage of families paying more than 30 percent or 40 percent of income exceeds the national average for either of such categories, as reported pursuant to clause (i), the public housing agency shall adjust the payment standard to eliminate excessive rent burdens within a reasonable time period or explain its reasons for not making such adjustment. The Secretary may not deny the request of a public housing agency to set a payment standard up to 120 percent of the fair market rent to remedy rent burdens in excess of the national average or undue concentration of families assisted under this subsection in lower rent, higher poverty sections of a metropolitan area except on the basis that an agency has not demonstrated that its request meets these criteria. If a request of a public housing agency has not been denied or approved with 45 days after the request is made, the request shall be considered to have been approved.''.

(b) PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCY PLAN.—Section 5A(d)(4) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437c–1(d)(4)) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', including the report with respect to the agency furnished by the Secretary pursuant to section 8(o)(1)(E) concerning rent burdens and, if applicable, geographic concentration of voucher holders, any changes in rent or other policies the public housing agency is making to address excessive rent burdens or concentration, and if the public housing agency is not adjusting its payment standard, its reasons for not doing so''.

(c) RENT BURDENS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.—Subparagraph (D) of section 8(o)(1) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', except that a public housing agency may establish a payment standard of not more than 120 percent of the fair market rent where necessary as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability, without approval of the Secretary. A public housing agency may seek approval of the Secretary to use a payment standard greater than 120 percent of the fair market rent as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability''.

SEC. 13. ESTABLISHMENT OF FAIR MARKET RENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) of section 8(c) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(1)) is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(A)'' after the paragraph designation;

(2) by striking the seventh, eighth, and ninth sentences; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(B)(i) The Secretary shall endeavor to define market areas for purposes of this paragraph in a manner that results in fair market rentals that are adequate to cover typical rental costs of units suitable for occupancy by persons assisted under this section in as wide a range of communities as is feasible, including communities with low poverty rates.

''(ii) The Secretary at a minimum shall define a separate market area for each—

''(I) metropolitan city, as such term is defined in section 102(a) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5302(a)), with more than 40,000 rental dwelling units; and

''(II) urban county or portion of an urban county, as such term is defined in such section 102(a), located outside the boundaries of any metropolitan city specified in subclause (I).

''(iii) The Secretary shall, at the request of one or more public housing agencies, establish a separate market area for part or all of the area under the jurisdiction of such agencies, if—

''(I) the requested market area contains at least 20,000 rental dwelling units;

''(II) the areas contained in the requested market area are geographically contiguous and share similar housing market characteristics;

''(III) adequate data are available to establish a reliable fair market rental for the requested market area, and for the remainder of the market area in which it is currently located; and

''(IV) establishing the requested market area would raise or lower the fair market rental by 10 percent or more at the time the requested market area is established.

For purposes of subclause (III), data for an area shall be considered adequate if they are sufficient to establish from time to time a reliable benchmark fair market rental based primarily on data from that area, whether or not those data need to be supplemented with data from a larger area for purposes of annual updates.

''(iv) The Secretary shall not reduce the fair market rental in a market area as a result of a change in the percentile of the distribution of market rents used to establish the fair market rental.''.

(b) PAYMENT STANDARD.—Subparagraph (B) of section 8(o)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(1)(B)) is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', except that no public housing agency shall be required as a result of a reduction in the fair market rental to reduce the payment standard applied to a family continuing to reside in a unit for which the family was receiving assistance under this section at the time the fair market rental was reduced''.

SEC. 14. SCREENING OF APPLICANTS.

Subparagraph (B) of section 8(o)(6) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (1437f(o)(6)(B)) is amended by inserting after the period at the end of the second sentence the following: ''A public housing agency's elective screening shall be limited to criteria that are directly related to an applicant's ability to fulfill the obligations of an assisted lease and shall consider mitigating circumstances related to such applicant. Any applicant or participant determined to be ineligible for admission or continued participation to the program shall be notified of the basis for such determination and provided, within a reasonable time after the determination, an opportunity for an informal hearing on such determination at which mitigating circumstances, including remedial conduct subsequent to the notice, shall be considered.''.

SEC. 15. ENHANCED VOUCHERS.

Subparagraph (B) of section 8(t)(1) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(t)(1)(B)) is amended by inserting after ''eligibility event for the project,'' the following: ''regardless of unit and family size standards normally used by the administering agency (except that tenants may be required to move to units of appropriate size if available on the premises),''.

SEC. 16. HOUSING INNOVATION PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—Title I of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''SEC. 36. HOUSING INNOVATION PROGRAM.

''(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the program under this section is to provide public housing agencies and the Secretary the flexibility to design and evaluate innovative approaches to providing housing assistance that—

''(1) increase housing opportunities for low-income families, including preventing homelessness, rehabilitate or replace housing at risk of physical deterioration or obsolescence, and develop additional affordable housing;

''(2) leverage other Federal, State, and local funding sources, including the low-income housing tax credit program, to expand and preserve affordable housing opportunities, including public housing;

''(3) provide financial incentives and other support mechanisms to families to obtain employment and increase earned income;

''(4) test alternative rent-setting policies to determine whether rent determinations can be simplified and administrative cost savings can be realized while protecting extremely low- and very low-income families from increased rent burdens;

''(5) are subject to rigorous evaluation to test the effectiveness of such innovative approaches; and

''(6) are developed with the support of the local community and with the substantial participation of affected residents.

''(b) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—

''(1) SCOPE.—The Secretary shall carry out a housing innovation program under this section under which the Secretary may designate not more than 60 public housing agencies to participate, at any one time, in the housing innovation program, in accordance with subsections (c) and (d), except that, in addition to such 60 agencies, the Secretary may designate an additional 20 agencies to participate in the program under the terms of subsection (h).

''(2) DURATION.—The Secretary may carry out the housing innovation program under this section only during the 10-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.

''(c) PARTICIPATION OF EXISTING MTW AGENCIES.—

''(1) EXISTING MTW AGENCIES.—Subject to the requirements of paragraph (2), all existing MTW agencies shall be designated to participate in the program.

''(2) CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION.—The Secretary shall approve and transfer into the housing innovation program under this section each existing MTW agency that the Secretary determines is not in default under such agreement and which the Secretary also determines is meeting the goals and objectives of its moving to work plan. Each such agency shall, within two years after the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, make changes to its policies that were implemented before such date of enactment in order to comply with the requirements of this section.

''(d) ADDITIONAL AGENCIES.—

''(1) PROPOSALS; SELECTION PROCESS.—In addition to agencies participating in the program pursuant to subsection (c), the Secretary shall,

within 18 months after such date of enactment, select public housing agencies to participate in the program pursuant to a competitive process that meets the following requirements:

''(A) Any public housing agency may be selected to participate in the program, except that not more than 5 agencies that are near-troubled under the public housing assessment system and/or section 8 management assessment program may be selected, and except that any agency for which the Secretary has hired an alternative management entity for such agency or has taken possession of all or any part of such agency's public housing program shall not be eligible for participation. Any near-troubled public housing agency participating in the program shall remain subject to the requirements of this Act governing tenant rent contributions, eligibility, and continued participation, and may not adopt policies described in subsection (e)(4) (relating to rents and requirements for continued occupation and participation).

''(B) The process provides, to the extent possible based on eligible agencies submitting applications and taking into account existing MTW agencies participating pursuant to subsection (c), for representation among agencies selected of agencies having various characteristics, including both large and small agencies, agencies serving urban, suburban, and rural areas, and agencies in various geographical regions throughout the United States, and which may include the selection of agencies that only administer the voucher program under section 8(o).

''(C) Any agency submitting a proposal under this paragraph shall have provided notice to residents and the local community, not later than 30 days before the first of the two public meetings required under subparagraph (D).

''(D) The agency submitting a proposal shall hold two public meetings to receive comments on the agency's proposed application, on the implications of changes under the proposal, and the possible impact on residents.

''(E) The process includes criteria for selection, as follows:

''(i) The extent to which the proposal generally identifies existing rules and regulations that impede achievement of the goals and objectives of the proposal and an explanation of why participation in the program is necessary to achieve such goals and objectives.

''(ii) The extent of commitment and funding for carrying out the proposal by local government agencies and nonprofit organizations, including the provision of additional funding and other services, and the extent of support for the proposal by residents, resident advisory boards, and members of the local community.

''(iii) The extent to which the agency has a successful history of implementing strategies similar to those set forth in the agency's proposal.

''(iv) Whether the proposal pursues a priority strategy as specified in paragraph (2). In the case of any proposal utilizing a such a priority strategy, the proposal shall be evaluated based upon—

''(I) the extent to which the proposal is likely to achieve the objectives of developing additional housing dwelling units affordable to extremely low-, very low-, and low-income families, and preserving, rehabilitating, or modernizing existing public housing dwelling units; or

''(II) the extent to which the proposal is likely to achieve the purposes of moving families toward economic self-sufficiency and increasing employment rates and wages of families without imposing a significant rent burden on the lowest income families, as well as such of the additional purposes as may be identified in the proposal, which may include expanding housing choices utilizing coordinators for the family self-sufficiency program under section 23, making more effective use of program funds, and improving program management.

''(v) Such other factors as the Secretary may provide, in consultation with participating agencies, program stakeholders, and any entity conducting evaluations pursuant to subsection (f).

''(2) PRIORITY STRATEGIES.—For purposes of paragraph (1)(E)(iv), the following are priority strategies:

''(A) DEVELOPMENT, REHABILITATION, AND FINANCING.—A strategy of development of additional affordable housing dwelling units and/or a strategy for preservation and physical rehabilitation and modernization of existing public housing dwelling units. Such strategies may include innovative financing proposals, leveraging of non-public housing funds (including the low-income housing tax credit program), and combining of funds for assistance under sections 8 and 9. Each such proposal shall include detailed information about the strategies expected to be employed, an explanation of why participation in the program is necessary to employ such strategies, and numerical goals regarding the number of dwelling units to be developed, preserved, or rehabilitated.

''(B) RENT REFORMS.—A strategy to implement rent reforms, which shall be designed to help families increase their earned income through rent and other work incentives, and may also test the effectiveness of achieving administrative cost savings without increased rent burdens for extremely low- and very low-income families.

''(3) CONTRACT AMENDMENT.—After selecting agencies under this subsection, the Secretary shall promptly amend the applicable annual contributions contracts of such agencies to provide that—

''(A) subject to subparagraph (B), such agencies may implement any policies and activities that are not inconsistent with this section without specifying such policies and activities in such amendment and without negotiating or entering into any other agreements with the Secretary specifying such policies and activities; and

''(B) the activities to be implemented by an agency under the program in a given year shall be described in and subject to the requirements of the annual plan under subsection (e)(8). Upon the enactment of this section, any agency which has participated in the Moving to Work demonstration may, at its option, be subject to the provisions of this paragraph in lieu of any other agreement required by the Secretary for participation in the program.

''(4) MAINTAINING PARTICIPATION RATE.—If, at any time after the initial selection period under paragraph (1), the number of public housing agencies participating in the program under this section is fewer than 40, the Secretary shall promptly solicit applications from and select public housing agencies to participate in the program under the terms and conditions for application and selection provided in this section to increase the number of agencies participating in the program to 40.

''(e) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

''(1) PROGRAM FUNDS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—To carry out a housing innovation program under this section, the participating agency may use amounts provided to the agency from the Operating Fund under section 9(e), amounts provided to the agency from the Capital Fund under section 9(d), and amounts provided to the agency for voucher assistance under section 8(o). Such program funds may be used for any activities that are authorized by sections 8(o) or 9, or for other activities that are not inconsistent with this section, which shall include, without limitation—

''(i) providing capital and operating assistance, and financing for housing previously developed or operated pursuant to a contract between the Secretary and such agency;

''(ii) the acquisition, new construction, rehabilitation, financing, and provision of capital or operating assistance for low-income housing (including housing other than public housing) and related facilities, which may be for terms exceeding the term of the program under this section in order to secure other financing for such housing;

''(iii) costs of site acquisition and improvement, providing utility services, demolition, planning, and administration of activities under this paragraph;

''(iv) housing counseling for low-income families in connection with rental or homeownership assistance provided under the program;

''(v) safety, security, law enforcement, and anticrime activities appropriate to protect and support families assisted under the program;

''(vi) tenant-based rental assistance, which may include the project-basing of such assistance; and

''(vii) appropriate and reasonable financial assistance that is required to preserve low-income housing otherwise assisted under programs administered by the Secretary or under State or local low-income housing programs.

''(B) COMBINING FUNDS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a participating agency may combine and use program funds for any activities authorized under this section, except that a participating agency may use funds provided for assistance under section 8(o) for activities other than those authorized under section 8(o) only if (i) in the calendar year prior to its participation in the program, the agency utilized not less than 95 percent of such funds allocated for that calendar year for such authorized activities or 95 percent of its authorized vouchers, including vouchers ported in to the agency and vouchers ported out; or (ii) after approval to participate in the program, the agency achieves such utilization for a 12-month period. This subparagraph shall not apply to participating agencies approved by the Secretary to combine funds from sections 8 and 9 of the Act prior to enactment of this section.

''(2) USE OF PROGRAM FUNDS.—In carrying out the housing innovation program under this section, each participating agency shall continue to assist—

''(A) not less than substantially the same number of eligible low-income families under the program as it assisted in the base year for the agency; and

''(B) a comparable mix of families by family size, subject to adjustment to reflect changes in the agency's waiting list, except that the Secretary may approve exceptions to such requirements for up to 3 years based on modernization or redevelopment activities proposed in an annual plan submitted and approved in accordance with paragraph (8).

Determinations with respect to the number of families served shall be adjusted based on any allocation of additional vouchers under section 8(o) and to reflect any change in the percentage of program funds that a participating agency receives compared to the base year.

''(3) RETAINED PROVISIONS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, families receiving assistance under this section shall retain the same rights of judicial review of agency action as they would otherwise have had if the agency were not participating in the program, and each participating agency shall comply with the following provisions of this Act:

''(A) Subsections (a)(2)(A) and (b)(1) of section 16 (relating to targeting for new admissions in the public housing and voucher programs).

''(B) Section 2(b) (relating to tenant representatives on the public housing agency board of directors).

''(C) Section 3(b)(2) (relating to definitions for the terms 'low-income families' and 'very low-income families').

''(D) Section 5(A)(e) (relating to the formation of and consultation with a resident advisory board).

''(E) Sections 6(f)(1) and 8(o)(8)(B) (relating to compliance of units assisted with housing quality standards or other codes).

''(F) Sections 6(c)(3), 6(c)(4)(i), and 8(o)(6)(B) (relating to rights of public housing applicants

and existing procedural rights for applicants under section 8(o)).

''(G) Section 6(k) (relating to grievance procedures for public housing tenants) and comparable procedural rights for families assisted under section 8(o).

''(H) Section 6(l) (relating to public housing lease requirements), except that for units assisted both with program funds and low-income housing tax credits, the initial lease term may be less than 12 months if required to conform lease terms with such tax credit requirements.

''(I) Section 7 (relating to designation of housing for elderly and disabled households), except that a participating agency may make such designations(at initial designation or upon renewal) for a term of up to 5 years if the agency includes in its annual plan under paragraph (8) an analysis of the impact of such designations on affected households and such designation is subject to the program evaluation. Any participating agency with a designated housing plan that was approved under the moving to work demonstration may continue to operate under the terms of such plan for a term of 5 years (with an option to renew on the same terms for an additional 5 years) if it includes in its annual plan an analysis of the impact of such designations on affected households and is subject to evaluation under subsection (f).

''(J) Subparagraphs (C) through (E) of section 8(o)(7) (relating to lease requirements and eviction protections for families assisted with tenant-based assistance).

''(K) Subject to paragraph (1)(B) of this subsection, section 8(o)(13)(B) (relating to a percentage limitation on project-based assistance), except that for purposes of this subparagraph such section shall be applied by substituting '50 percent' for '20 percent'.

''(L) Section 8(o)(13)(E) (relating to resident choice for tenants of units with project-based vouchers), except with respect to—

''(i) in the case of agencies participating in the moving to work demonstration, any housing assistance payment contract entered into within 2 years after the enactment of this section;

''(ii) project-based vouchers that replace public housing units;

''(iii) not more than 10 percent of the vouchers available to the participating agency upon entering the housing innovation program under this section; and

''(iv) any project-based voucher program that is subject to evaluation under subsection (f).

''(M) Section 8(r) (relating to portability of voucher assistance), except that a participating agency may receive funding for portability obligations under section 8(dd) in the same manner as other public housing agencies.

''(N) Subsections (a) and (b) of section 12 (relating to payment of prevailing wages).

''(O) Section 18 (relating to demolition and disposition of public housing).

''(4) RENTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTINUED OCCUPANCY OR PARTICIPATION.—

''(A) BEFORE POLICY CHANGE.—Before adopting any policy pursuant to participation in the housing innovation program under this section that would make a material change to the requirements of this Act regarding tenant rents or contributions, or conditions of continued occupancy or participation, a participating agency shall complete each of the following actions:

''(i) The agency shall conduct an impact analysis of the proposed policy on families the agency is assisting under the program under this section and on applicants on the waiting list, including analysis of the incidence and severity of rent burdens greater than 30 percent of adjusted income on households of various sizes and types and in various income tiers, that would result, if any, without application of the hardship provisions. The analysis with respect to applicants on the waiting list may be limited to demographic data provided by the applicable consolidated plan, information provided by the Secretary, and other generally available information. The proposed policy, including provisions for addressing hardship cases and transition provisions that mitigate the impact of any rent increases or changes in the conditions of continued occupancy or participation, and data from this analysis shall be made available for public inspection for at least 60 days in advance of the public meeting described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The agency shall hold a public meeting regarding the proposed change, including the hardship provisions, which may be combined with a public meeting on the draft annual plan under paragraph (8) or the annual report under paragraph (9).

''(iii) The board of directors or other similar governing body of the agency shall approve the change in public session.

''(iv) The agency shall obtain approval from the Secretary of the annual plan or plan amendment. The Secretary may approve a plan or amendment containing a material change to the requirements of this Act regarding tenant rents or contributions, or conditions of continued occupancy or participation, only if the agency agrees that such policy may be included as part of the national evaluation.

''(B) AFTER POLICY CHANGE.—After adopting a policy described in subparagraph (A), a program agency shall complete each of the following actions:

''(i) The agency shall provide adequate notice to residents, which shall include a description of the changes in the public housing lease or participation agreement that may be required and of the hardship or transition protections offered.

''(ii) In the case of any additional requirements for continued occupancy or participation, the agency shall execute a lease addendum or participation agreement specifying the requirements applicable to both the resident and the agency. A resident may bring a civil action to enforce commitments of the agency made through the lease addendum or participation agreement.

''(iii) The agency shall reassess rent, subsidy level, and policies on program participation no less often than every two years, which shall include preparing a revised impact analysis, and make available to the public the results of such reassessment and impact analysis. The requirement under this clause may be met by sufficiently detailed interim reports, if any, by the national evaluating entity.

''(iv) The agency shall include in the annual report under paragraph (8) information sufficient to describe any hardship requests, including the number and types of requests made, granted, and denied, the use of transition rules, and adverse impacts resulting from changes in rent or continued occupancy policies, including actions taken by the agency to mitigate such impacts and impacts on families no longer assisted under the program.

''(C) APPLICABILITY TO EXISTING MTW AGENCIES.—An existing MTW agency that, before the date of the enactment of this section, implemented material changes to the requirements of this Act regarding tenant rents or contributions, or conditions of continued occupancy or participation, as part of the moving to work demonstration shall not be subject to subparagraph (A) with regard to such previously implemented changes, but shall comply with the requirements of subparagraph (B)(ii) and provide the evaluation and impact analysis required by subparagraph (B)(iii) by the end of the second agency fiscal year ending after such date of enactment.

''(5) PROHIBITION AGAINST DECREASE IN PROGRAM FUNDS.—The amount of program funds a participating agency receives shall not be diminished by its participation in the housing innovation program under this section.

''(6) SUBMISSION OF INFORMATION.—As part of the annual report required under subsection (g)(2), each participating agency shall submit information annually to the Secretary regarding families assisted under the program of the agency and comply with any other data submissions required by the Secretary for purposes of evaluation of the program under this section.

''(7) PUBLIC AND RESIDENT PARTICIPATION.—Each participating agency shall provide opportunities for resident and public participation in the annual plan under paragraph (8), as follows:

''(A) NOTICE TO RESIDENTS.—

''(i) NOTICE.—Each year, the agency shall provide notice to the low-income families it serves under the programs authorized by this section as to the impact of proposed policy changes and program initiatives and of the schedule of resident advisory board and public meetings for the annual plan.

''(ii) MEETING.—The agency shall hold at least one meeting with the resident advisory board (including representatives of recipients of assistance under section 8) to review the annual plan for each year.

''(B) PUBLIC MEETING.—With respect to each annual plan, the agency shall hold at least one annual public meeting to obtain comments on the plan, which may be combined with a meeting to review the annual report. In the case of any agency that administers, in the aggregate, more than 15,000 public housing units and vouchers, the agency shall hold additional meetings in locations that promote attendance by residents and other stakeholders.

''(C) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Before adoption of any annual plan, and not less than 30 days before the public meeting required under subparagraph (A)(ii) with respect to the plan, the agency shall make the proposed annual plan available for public inspection. The annual plan shall be made available for public inspection not less than 30 days before approval by the board of directors (or other similar governing body) of the agency and shall remain publicly available.

''(D) BOARD APPROVAL.—Before submitting an annual plan or annual report to the Secretary, the plan or report, as applicable, shall be approved in a public meeting by the board of directors or other governing body of the agency.

''(8) ANNUAL PLAN.—

''(A) REQUIREMENT.—For each year that a participating agency participates in the housing innovation program under this section, the agency shall submit to the Secretary, in lieu of all other planning requirements, an annual plan under this paragraph.

''(B) CONTENTS.—Each annual plan shall include the following information:

''(i) A list and description of all program initiatives and generally applicable policy changes, including references to affected provisions of law or the implementing regulations affected.

''(ii) A description and comparison of changes under the housing innovation program of the agency from the plan for such program for the preceding year.

''(iii) A description of property redevelopment or portfolio repositioning strategies and proposed changes in policies or uses of funds required to implement such strategies.

''(iv) Documentation of public and resident participation sufficient to comply with the requirements under paragraphs (4) and (7), including a copy of any recommendations submitted in writing by the resident advisory board of the agency and members of the public, a summary of comments, and a description of the manner in which the recommendations were addressed.

''(v) Certifications by the agency that—

''(I) the annual plan will be carried out in conformity with title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the rules, standards, and policies in the approved plan;

''(II) the agency will affirmatively further fair housing; and

''(III) the agency has complied and will continue to comply with its obligations under the national evaluation.

''(vi) A description of the agency's local asset management strategy for public housing properties, which shall be in lieu of any other asset

management, project based management or accounting, or other system of allocating resources and costs to participating agency assets or cost centers that the Secretary may otherwise impose under this Act.

''(C) CHANGES.—If the agency proposes to make material changes in policies or initiatives in the plan during the year covered by the plan, the agency shall consult with the resident advisory board for the agency established pursuant to section 5A(e) and the public regarding such changes before their adoption.

''(D) APPROVAL PROCESS.—

''(i) TIMING.—The Secretary shall review and approve or disapprove each annual plan submitted to the Secretary within 45 days after such submission.

''(ii) STANDARDS FOR DISAPPROVAL.—The Secretary may disapprove a plan only if—

''(I) the Secretary reasonably determines, based on information contained in the annual plan or annual report, that the agency is not in compliance with the requirements of this section;

''(II) the annual plan or most recent annual report is not consistent with other reliable information available to the Secretary; or

''(III) the annual plan or annual report or the agency's activities under the program are not otherwise in accordance with applicable law.

''(iii) FAILURE TO DISAPPROVE.—If a submitted plan is not disapproved within 45 days after submission, the plan shall be considered to be approved for purposes of this section. The preceding sentence shall not preclude judicial review regarding such compliance pursuant to chapter 7 of title 5, United States Code, or an action regarding such compliance under section 1979 of the Revised Statutes of the United States (42 U.S.C. 1983).

''(f) EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than the expiration of the one-year period that begins upon selection under subsection (d) of at least half of the number of agencies able to participate in the program under this section, the Secretary shall conduct detailed evaluations of all public housing agencies participating in the program under this section—

''(A) to determine the level of success of each public housing agency in achieving the purposes of the program under subsection (a); and

''(B) to identify program models that can be replicated by other agencies to achieve such success.

''(2) REPORTS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall submit three reports to the Congress, as provided in subparagraph (B), evaluating the programs of all public housing agencies participating in the program under this section and all agencies participating in the moving to work demonstration. Each such report shall include findings and recommendations for any appropriate legislative action.

''(B) TIMING.—The reports under this paragraph shall include—

''(i) an initial report, which shall be submitted before the expiration of the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007;

''(ii) an interim report, which shall be submitted before the expiration of the 5-year period beginning on such date of enactment; and

''(iii) a final report, which shall be submitted before the expiration of the 10-year period beginning on such date of enactment.

''(3) EVALUATING ENTITY.—The Secretary may contract out the responsibilities under this paragraphs (1) and (2) to an independent entity that is qualified to perform such responsibilities.

''(4) PERFORMANCE MEASURES.—The Secretary or the evaluating entity, as applicable, shall establish performance measures, which may include—

''(A) a baseline performance level against which program activities may be evaluated; and

''(B) performance measures for—

''(i) increasing housing opportunities for extremely low-, very low-, and low-income families, replacing or rehabilitating housing at risk of physical deterioration or obsolescence, and developing additional affordable housing;

''(ii) leveraging other Federal, State, and local funding sources, including the low-income housing tax credit program, to expand and preserve affordable housing opportunities, including public housing;

''(iii) moving families to self-sufficiency and increasing employment rates and wages of families without imposing a significant rent burden on the families having the lowest incomes;

''(iv) reducing administrative costs; and

''(v) any other performance measures that the Secretary or evaluating entity, as applicable, may establish.

''(g) RECORDKEEPING, REPORTS, AND AUDITS.—

''(1) RECORDKEEPING.—Each public housing agency participating in the program under this section shall keep such records as the Secretary may prescribe as reasonably necessary to disclose the amounts and the disposition of amounts under the program, to ensure compliance with the requirements of this section, and to measure performance.

''(2) REPORTS.—In lieu of all other reporting requirements, each such agency participating in the program shall submit to the Secretary an annual report in a form and at a time specified by the Secretary. Each annual report shall include the following information:

''(A) A description, including an annual consolidated financial report, of the sources and uses of funds of the agency under the program, which shall account separately for funds made available under section 8 and subsections (d) and (e) of section 9, and shall compare the agency's actions under the program with its annual plan for the year.

''(B) An annual audit that complies with the requirements of Circular A–133 of the Office of Management and Budget, including the OMB Compliance Supplement.

''(C) A description of each hardship exception requested and granted or denied, and of the use of any transition rules.

''(D) Documentation of public and resident participation sufficient to comply with the requirements under paragraph (7).

''(E) A comparison of income and the sizes and types of families assisted by the agency under the program compared to those assisted by the agency in the base year.

''(F) Every two years, an evaluation of rent policies, subsidy level policies, and policies on program participation.

''(G) A description of any ongoing local evaluations and the results of any local evaluations completed during the year.

''(3) ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall have access for the purpose of audit and examination to any books, documents, papers, and records that are pertinent to assistance in connection with, and the requirements of, this section.

''(4) ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States, or any of the duly authorized representatives of the Comptroller General, shall have access for the purpose of audit and examination to any books, documents, papers, and records that are pertinent to assistance in connection with, and the requirements of, this section.

''(5) REPORTS REGARDING EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary shall require each public housing agency participating in the program under this section to submit to the Secretary, as part of the agency's annual report under paragraph (2), such information as the Secretary considers appropriate to permit the Secretary to evaluate (pursuant to subsection (f)) the performance and success of the agency in achieving the purposes of the demonstration.

''(h) ADDITIONAL PROGRAM AGENCIES.—In participating in the program under the terms of this subsection, the public housing agencies designated for such participation shall be subject to the requirements of this section, and the additional following requirements:

''(1) APPLICABILITY OF CERTAIN EXISTING PROVISIONS.—Such agencies shall be subject to the provisions of—

''(A) subsections (a) and (b) of section 3; and

''(B) section 8(o), except for paragraph (11) and except that such agencies shall not be required to comply with any provision of such section 8(o) that pursuant to subsection (e)(3) of this section does not apply to agencies that are subject to such section (e)(3).

''(2) NO TIME LIMITS.—Such agencies may not impose time limits on the term of housing assistance received by families under the program.

''(3) NO EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS.—Such agencies may not condition the receipt of housing assistance by families under the program on the employment status of one of more family members.

''(4) ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT.—

''(A) CONDITIONS ON DEMOLITION.—Such agencies may not demolish or dispose of any dwelling unit of public housing operated or administered by such agency (including any uninhabitable unit and any unit previously approved for demolition) except pursuant to a plan for replacement of such units in accordance with, and approved by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development pursuant to, subparagraph (B).

''(B) PLAN REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary may not approve a plan that provides for demolition or disposition of any dwelling unit of public housing referred to in subparagraph (A) unless—

''(i) such plan provides for outreach to public housing agency residents in accordance with paragraph (5);

''(ii) not later than 60 days before the date of the approval of such plan, such agency has convened and conducted a public hearing regarding the demolition or disposition proposed in the plan;

''(iii) such plan provides that for each such dwelling unit demolished or disposed of, such public housing agency will provide an additional dwelling unit through—

''(I) the acquisition or development of additional public housing dwelling units; or

''(II) the acquisition, development, or contracting (including through project-based assistance) of additional dwelling units that are subject to requirements regarding eligibility for occupancy, tenant contribution toward rent, and long-term affordability restrictions which are comparable to public housing units;

''(iv) such plan provides for a right, and implementation of such right, to occupancy of additional dwelling units provided in accordance with clause (iii), for households who, as of the time that dwelling units demolished or disposed of were vacated to provide for such demolition or disposition, were occupying such dwelling units;

''(v) such plan provides that the proposed demolition or disposition and relocation will be carried out in a manner that affirmatively furthers fair housing, as described in subsection (e) of section 808 of the Civil Rights Act of 1968; and

''(vi) to the extent that such plan provides for the provision of replacement or additional dwelling units, or redevelopment, in phases over time, such plan provides that the ratio of dwelling units described in subclauses (I) and (II) of clause (iii) that are provided in any such single phase to the total number of dwelling units provided in such phase is not less than the ratio of the aggregate number of such dwelling units provided under the plan to the total number of dwelling units provided under the plan.

''(C) INAPPLICABLE PROVISIONS.—Subparagraphs (B) and (D) of section 8(o)(13) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(13)) shall not apply with respect to vouchers used to comply with the requirements of subparagraph (B)(iii) of this paragraph.

''(D) MONITORING.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall provide for the appropriate field offices of the Department to monitor and supervise enforcement of this paragraph and plans approved under this paragraph and to consult, regarding such monitoring and enforcement, with resident councils of, and residents of public housing operated or administered by, the agency.

''(5) COMPREHENSIVE OUTREACH PLAN.—No program funds of such agencies may be use to demolish, dispose of, or eliminate any public housing dwelling units except in accordance with a comprehensive outreach plan for such activities, developed by the agency in conjunction with the residents of the public housing agency, as follows:

''(A) The plan shall be developed by the agency and a resident task force, which may include members of the Resident Council, but may not be limited to such members, and which shall represent all segments of the population of residents of the agency, including single parent-headed households, the elderly, young employed and unemployed adults, teenage youth, and disabled persons.

''(B) The votes and agreements regarding the plan shall involve not less than 25 and not more than 35 persons.

''(C) The plan shall provide for and describe outreach efforts to inform residents of the program under this subsection, including a door-to-door information program, monthly newsletters to each resident household, monthly meetings dedicated solely to every aspect of the proposed development, including redevelopment factors, which shall include the one-for-one replacement requirement under paragraph (5), resident rights to return, the requirements of the program under this subsection, new resident support and community services to be provided, opportunities for participation in architectural design, and employment opportunities for residents, which shall reserve at least 70 percent of the jobs in demolition activities and 50 percent of the jobs in construction activities related to the redevelopment project, including job training, apprenticeships, union membership assistance.

''(D) The plan shall provide for regularly scheduled monthly meeting updates and a system for filing complaints about any aspect of the redevelopment process.

''(i) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

''(1) EXISTING MTW AGENCY.—The term 'existing MTW agency' means a public housing agency that as of the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007 has an existing agreement with the Secretary pursuant to the moving to work demonstration.

''(2) BASE YEAR.—The term 'base year' means, with respect to a participating agency, the agency fiscal year most recently completed prior to selection and approval for participation in the housing innovation program under this section.

''(3) MOVING TO WORK DEMONSTRATION.—The term 'moving to work demonstration' means the moving to work demonstration program under section 204 of the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 1996 (42 U.S.C. 1437f note).

''(4) PARTICIPATING AGENCIES.—The term 'participating agencies' means public housing agencies designated and approved for participation, and participating, in the housing innovation program under this section.

''(5) PROGRAM FUNDS.—The term 'program funds' means, with respect to a participating agency, any amounts that the agency is authorized, pursuant to subsection (e)(1), to use to carry out the housing innovation program under this section of the agency.

''(6) RESIDENTS.—The term 'residents' means, with respect to a public housing agency, tenants of public housing of the agency and participants in the voucher or other housing assistance programs of the agency funded under section 8(o), or tenants of other units owned by the agency and assisted under this section.

''(j) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR RESIDENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—There is authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012 $10,000,000, for providing capacity building and technical assistance to enhance the capabilities of low-income families assisted under the program under this section to participate in the process for establishment of annual plans under this section for participating agencies.

''(k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR EVALUATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated $15,000,000 to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the purpose of conducting the evaluations required under subsection (f)(1).''.

(b) GAO REPORT.—Not later than 48 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report to the Congress on the extent to which the public housing agencies participating in the housing innovation program under section 36 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 are meeting the goals and purposes of such program, as identified in subsection (a) of such section 36.

SEC. 17. DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM WAIVER AUTHORITY.

(a) AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENTS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development may enter into such agreements as may be necessary with the Social Security Administration and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to allow for the participation, in any demonstration program described in subsection (c), by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the use under such program of housing choice vouchers under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)).

(b) WAIVER OF INCOME REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development may, to extent necessary to allow rental assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 to be provided on behalf of persons described in subsection (c) who participate in a demonstration program described in such subsection, and to allow such persons to be placed on a waiting list for such assistance, partially or wholly disregard increases in earned income for the purpose of rent calculations under section 3 for such persons.

(c) DEMONSTRATION PROGRAMS.—A demonstration program described in this subsection is a demonstration program of a State that provides for persons with significant disabilities to be employed and continue to receive benefits under programs of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Social Security Administration, including the program of supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act, disability insurance benefits under title II of such Act, and the State program for medical assistance (Medicaid) under title XIX of such Act.

SEC. 18. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated the amount necessary for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to provide public housing agencies with incremental tenant-based assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)) sufficient to assist 20,000 incremental dwelling units in each such fiscal year.

SEC. 19. EFFECTIVE DATE.

Except as otherwise specifically provided in this Act, this Act and the amendments made by this Act, shall take effect on January 1, 2008.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. No amendment to the committee amendment is in order except the amendments printed in House Report 110–227. Each amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report; by a member designated in the report; shall be considered read; shall be debatable for the time specified in the report, equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent of the amendment; shall not be subject to amendment; and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MS. WATERS

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in House Report 110–227.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 1 offered by Ms. WATERS:

Page 4, line 16, strike ''biennial inspections'' and insert ''inspections not less often than biennially''.

Page 6, strike lines 5 and 6 and insert the following:

(3) by redesignating subparagraph (E) as subparagraph (G);

(4) by inserting after subparagraph (D) the following new subparagraphs:

''(E) INTERIM INSPECTIONS.—Upon notification to the public housing agency, by a family on whose behalf tenant-based rental assistance is provided under this subsection or by a government official, that the dwelling unit for which such assistance is provided does not comply with the housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), the agency shall inspect the dwelling unit—

''(i) in the case of any condition that is life-threatening, within 24 hours after receipt of such notice; and

''(ii) in the case of any condition that is not life-threatening, within 15 days after receipt of such notice.''.

Page 7, strike lines 1 through 3 and insert the following:

''(III) the failure to comply is not corrected—

''(aa) in the case of any such failure that is a result of life-threatening conditions, within 24 hours after receipt of such notice; and

''(bb) in the case of any such failure that is a result of non-life threatening conditions, within 30 days after receipt of such notice or such other reasonable period as the public housing agency may establish.''.

Page 7, line 4, strike ''AND RELEASE''.

Page 7, strike ''Subject'' in line 10 and all that follows through line 14, and insert the following: ''Upon completion of repairs by the public housing agency or the owner sufficient so that the dwelling unit complies with such housing quality standards, the agency shall recommence payments under the housing assistance payments contract to the owner of the dwelling unit.''.

Page 7, strike ''(or to'' in line 19 and all that follows through line 24, and insert the following: '', except that a contract to make repairs may not be entered into with the inspector for the dwelling unit referred to in clause (i)(I).''.

Page 8, line 6, after the period insert the following: ''During the period that assistance is withheld pursuant to this subparagraph, the tenant may terminate the tenancy by notifying the owner.''.

Page 8, strike ''before'' in line 12 and all that follows through line 16, and insert the following: ''within 60 days after the effective date of the determination of noncompliance

under clause (i), or such other reasonable period as the public housing agency may establish, and the agency does not use its authority under clause (iii), the agency shall terminate the housing assistance payments contract for the dwelling unit. The agency shall provide the family residing in such a dwelling unit a period of 90 days, beginning upon termination of the contract, to lease a new residence to assist with the tenant-based rental assistance made available under this section for the family. If the family is unable to lease such a new residence during such period, the public housing agency shall extend the period during which the family may lease a new residence to be assisted with such assistance or provide such family a preference for occupancy in a dwelling unit of public housing owned or operated by the agency that first becomes available for occupancy after the expiration of such period. The agency shall provide reasonable assistance to the family in finding a new residence, including use of two months of any assistance amounts withheld pursuant to clause (ii) for costs associated with relocation of the family to a new residence.''.

Page 8, after line 16, insert the following:

''(vi) LIMITATION OF LIABILITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES.—A public housing agency that uses its authority under clause (iii) shall not, if the agency accomplishes the work through a contractor that is licensed, bonded, and insured in amounts and with coverage as required by the Secretary, be liable for any injury or damages that may result to persons or to any property owned by the tenant or owner.

''(vii) TENANT-CAUSED DAMAGES.—If a public housing agency determines that any damage to a dwelling unit that results in a failure of the dwelling unit to comply with housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), other than any damage resulting from ordinary use, was caused by the tenant, any member of the tenant's household, or any guest or other person under the tenant's control, the agency may, in the discretion of the agency, waive the applicability of this subparagraph, except that this clause shall not exonerate a tenant from any liability otherwise existing under applicable law for damages to the premises caused by such tenant.''.

Page 8, line 17, strike ''(vi)'' and insert ''(viii)''.

Page 9, line 13, strike ''and''.

Page 9, after line 13, insert the following:

(B) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking ''paragraph (2)'' and inserting ''paragraphs (2) and (3)''; and

(ii) by striking ''paragraph (3)'' and inserting ''paragraph (4)'';

(C) in paragraph (2)(A)(i), by striking ''paragraph (3)'' and inserting ''paragraph (4)'';

(D) by redesignating paragraphs (4) and (5) as paragraphs (5) and (6), respectively;

(E) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph:

''(3) PHA AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH ALTERNATIVE RENTS.—

''(A) RENT FLEXIBILITY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING AND VOUCHER PROGRAM.—Subject to the requirements under subparagraph (B), a public housing agency may establish for public housing and for families on whose behalf assistance is provided under the program for tenant-based voucher assistance under section 8(o)—

''(i) a tenant rent structure in which—

''(I) the public housing agency establishes, based on the rental value of the unit, as determined by the public housing agency—

''(aa) a ceiling rent for each dwelling unit that it owns and operates; and

''(bb) a ceiling on the amount of the tenant contribution toward rent required of a family provided tenant-based assistance; and

''(II) such ceiling rent and tenant contribution are adjusted periodically on the basis of an inflation index or a recalculation of the rental value of the unit (which may be recalculated by unit or by building);

''(ii) an income-tiered tenant rent structure in which the amount of rent a family shall pay is set and distributed on the basis of broad tiers of income and such tiers and rents are adjusted on the basis of an annual cost index except that families entering public housing shall not be offered a rent lower than the rent corresponding to their income tier; or

''(iii) a tenant rent structure in which the amount of rent a family shall pay is based on a percentage of family income, except that lower percentages may apply only with respect to earned income; such a rent structure may provide for an amount of rent based on a calculation of earned income that provides for disregard of a higher percentage or higher dollar amount, or both, than provided for in paragraph (8)(B).

''(B) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding the authority provided under subparagraph (A), the amount paid for rent (including the amount allowed for tenant-paid utilities) by any family for a dwelling unit in public housing or for rental of a dwelling unit for which tenant-based voucher assistance under section 8(o) is provided may not exceed the amount determined under subsection (a)(1) of this section or section 8(o), respectively. The Secretary shall issue regulations and establish procedures to ensure compliance with this subparagraph.

''(C) ELDERLY FAMILIES AND DISABLED FAMILIES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, this paragraph shall not apply to elderly families and disabled families.''; and

Page 9, line 14, strike ''(B)'' and insert ''(F)''.

Page 9, line 16, strike ''(6)'' and insert ''(7)''.

Page 12, line 19, strike ''(7)'' and insert ''(8)''.

Page 13, line 3, strike ''(6)(A)'' and insert ''(7)(A)''.

Page 13, line 18, strike ''(6)(B)(ii)'' and insert ''(7)(B)(ii)''.

Page 15, line 6, strike ''(6)'' and insert ''(7)''.

Page 19, line 13, strike ''(6) and (7)'' and insert ''(7) and (8)''.

Page 30, after line 11, insert the following:

''(xi) relocation and replacement of public housing units that are demolished or disposed of pursuant to eminent domain, pursuant to a homeownership program, or in connection with a mixed finance development method under section 35 or otherwise;''

Page 30, line 12, strike ''(xi)'' and insert ''(xii)''.

Page 30, line 15, strike ''(xii)'' and insert ''(xiii)''.

Page 30, line 24, strike ''or (x)'' and insert ''(x), or (xi)''.

Page 31, line 16, before the semicolon insert ''and of any incremental vouchers funded in previous years''.

Page 36, line 14, strike ''one twelfth'' and insert ''12.5 percent of''.

Page 39, lines 6 and 7, strike ''until superseded through subsequent rulemaking,''.

Page 57, after line 18, insert the following:

''(N) ADMINISTRATIVE FEE.—The administrative fee applicable to the administration of assistance under this paragraph shall be determined in the same manner as administrative fees applicable to other assistance administered under other provisions of this subsection.''.

Page 57, line 19, strike ''(N)'' and insert ''(O)''.

Page 68, line 6, after ''any agency'' insert ''that is a troubled agency under either such assessment program or''

Page 92, strike ''Not'' in line 5 and all that follows through ''the'' in line 9 and insert ''The''.

Strike line 24 on page 97 and all that follows through line 4 on page 98, and insert the following:

''(B) section 8(o), except for paragraph (11) and except as the requirements of section 8(o) are modified by subsection (e)(3) of this section.''.

Page 100, line 2, before the semicolon insert the following: '', except that no household may be prevented from occupying a replacement dwelling unit provided pursuant to clause (iii) except to the extent specifically provided by any other provision of Federal law (including subtitle F of title V of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (42 U.S.C. 13661 et seq.; relating to safety and security in public and assisted housing, subtitle D of title VI of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 13611 et seq.; relating to preferences for elderly and disabled residents), and section 16(f) of this Act (42 U.S.C. 1437n(f)); relating to ineligibility of persons convicted of methamphetamine offenses)''.

Page 101, line 22, strike '', dispose of, or eliminate'' and insert ''or dispose of''.

Page 102, strike lines 12 through 14 and insert the following:

''(b) The votes and agreements regarding the plan shall involve—

''(i) in the case of any public housing agency that administers 250 or fewer public housing dwelling units, not less than 10 percent of affected residents; and

''(ii) in the case of any public housing agency that administers more than 250 public housing dwelling units, not less than 25 affected residents''.

Page 103, strike lines 4 through 6 and insert the following: ''make available at least 30 percent of the total hours worked at all such employment, and shall also make available at least 25 percent of unskilled jobs in demolition activities and 25 percent of unskilled jobs in construction activities related to the redevelopment''.

Page 107, after line 2, insert the following new section:

SEC. 18. ACCESS TO HUD PROGRAMS FOR PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY.

(a) HUD RESPONSIBILITIES.—To allow the Department of Housing and Urban Development to better serve persons with limited proficiency in the English language by providing technical assistance to recipients of Federal funds, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall take the following actions:

(1) TASK FORCE.—Within 90 days after the enactment of this Act, convene a task force comprised of appropriate industry groups, recipients of funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (in this section referred to as the ''Department''), community-based organizations that serve individuals with limited English proficiency, civil rights groups, and stakeholders, which shall identify a list of vital documents, including Department and certain property and other documents, to be competently translated to improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for individuals with limited English proficiency. The task force shall meet not less frequently than twice per year.

(2) TRANSLATIONS.—Within 6 months after identification of documents pursuant to paragraph (1), produce translations of the documents identified in all necessary languages and make such translations available as part of the library of forms available on the website of the Department and as part of the clearinghouse developed pursuant to paragraph (4).

(3) PLAN.—Develop and carry out a plan that includes providing resources of the Department to assist recipients of Federal funds to improve access to programs and activities for individuals with limited English proficiency, which plan shall include the elements described in paragraph (4).

(4) HOUSING INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER.—Develop and maintain a housing information resource center to facilitate the provision of language services by providers of housing services to individuals with limited English proficiency. Information provided by such center shall be made available in printed form and through the Internet. The resources provided by the center shall include the following:

(A) TRANSLATION OF WRITTEN MATERIALS.—The center may provide, directly or through contract, vital documents from competent translation services for providers of housing services.

(B) TOLL-FREE CUSTOMER SERVICE TELEPHONE NUMBER.—The center shall provide a 24-hour toll-free interpretation service telephone line, by which recipients of funds of the Department and individuals with limited English proficiency may—

(i) obtain information about federally conducted or federally assisted housing programs of the Department;

(ii) obtain assistance with applying for or accessing such housing programs and understanding Federal notices written in English; and

(iii) communicate with housing providers. and learn how to access additional language services.

The toll-free telephone service provided pursuant to this subparagraph shall supplement resources in the community identified by the plan developed pursuant to paragraph (3).

(C) DOCUMENT CLEARINGHOUSE.—The center shall collect and evaluate for accuracy or develop, and make available, templates and documents that are necessary for consumers, relevant industry representatives, and other stakeholders of the Department, to access, make educated decisions, and communicate effectively about their housing, including—

(i) administrative and property documents;

(ii) legally binding documents;

(iii) consumer education and outreach materials;

(iv) documents regarding rights and responsibilities of any party; and

(v) remedies available to consumers.

(D) STUDY OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.—The center shall conduct a study that evaluates best-practices models for all programs of the Department that promote language assistance and strategies to improve language services for individuals with limited English proficiency. Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the center shall submit a report to the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate, which shall provide recommendations for implementation, specific to programs of the Department, and information and templates that could be made available to all recipients of grants from the Department.

(E) CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE MATERIALS.—The center shall provide information relating to culturally and linguistically competent housing services for populations with limited English proficiency.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out subsection (a).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than the expiration of the 6-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall submit a report regarding its compliance with the requirements under subsection (a) to the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

MODIFICATION TO AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MS. WATERS

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be modified by the form I have placed at the desk.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will report the modification.

The Clerk read as follows:

Modification to amendment No. 1 offered by Ms. WATERS:

The amendment is modified as follows:

In the matter proposed to be inserted by the eighth amendment instruction of the amendment (which begins ''Page 8, strike 'before' in line 12''), strike ''The agency shall provide the family'' and all that follows through ''relocation of the family to a new residence.''.

Strike the matter proposed to be inserted by the amendment at page 8 of the bill, after line 16, and insert the following:

''(vi) RELOCATION.—If the public housing agency terminates the housing assistance payments contract for a dwelling unit, the lease for any family residing in that unit shall terminate and the family may remain in the unit subject to a new lease as an unassisted family. The agency shall provide the family residing in such a dwelling unit a period of 90 days, beginning upon termination of the contract, to lease a new residence to assist with the tenant-based rental assistance made available under this section for the family. If the family is unable to lease such a new residence during such period, the public housing agency shall extend the period during which the family may lease a new residence to be assisted with such assistance or provide such family a preference for occupancy in a dwelling unit of public housing owned or operated by the agency that first becomes available for occupancy after the expiration of such period. The agency shall provide reasonable assistance to the family in finding a new residence, including use of two months of any assistance amounts withheld pursuant to clause (ii) for costs associated with relocation of the family to a new residence.

''(vii) LIMITATION OF LIABILITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES.—A public housing agency that uses its authority under clause (iii) shall not, if the agency accomplishes the work through a contractor that is licensed, bonded, and insured in amounts and with coverage as required by the Secretary, be liable for any injury or damages that may result to persons or to any property owned by the tenant or owner.

''(viii) TENANT-CAUSED DAMAGES.—If a public housing agency determines that any damage to a dwelling unit that results in a failure of the dwelling unit to comply with housing quality standards under subparagraph (B), other than any damage resulting from ordinary use, was caused by the tenant, any member of the tenant's household, or any guest or other person under the tenant's control, the agency may, in the discretion of the agency, waive the applicability of this subparagraph, except that this clause shall not exonerate a tenant from any liability otherwise existing under applicable law for damages to the premises caused by such tenant.''.

Strike the matter proposed to be inserted by the amendment at page 8 of the bill, line 17, and insert ''(ix)''.

Ms. WATERS (during the reading). Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the amendment is modified.

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I would like to thank the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Financial Services, Mr. BARNEY FRANK, and Ranking Member JUDY BIGGERT for their strong support of the manager's amendment to H.R. 1851.

The purpose of the amendment is to reform and improve the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007, regarding inspections, flexibility in rent-setting, transitional funding for the Nation's Public Housing Agencies, administrative fee calculations, limited English proficiency requirements, and the Housing Innovation Program. It also makes technical corrections to the bill.

The amendment provides more flexibility to make inspections by requiring them less frequently than every 2 years. This change will allow PHAs in areas with a deteriorating housing stock to conduct additional inspections in order to make sure families are housed in safe and decent units. In addition, the amendment fills the need for inspections that can be conducted at the request of the tenant within a specific amount of time.

My amendment solves a real catch-22 that often arises in the section 8 program. Many section 8 landlords are not large real estate concerns, but mom-and-pop operations that are not getting rich. Where units operated by a landlord fail inspection, right now there is a real danger that the landlord will choose to leave the program rather than make the repairs. This benefits nobody. And there is the catch-22. The landlord wants to stay in the program; the tenant certainly wants to stay in the unit if it can be repaired; but current law makes this positive resolution difficult to achieve.

PHAs will have the option to make repairs on the landlord's behalf. If the PHA or the landlord choose not to make the repair, the amendment protects tenants who will have to move to a new unit through no fault of their own. In the event a PHA chooses not to make a repair and the landlord still declines to repair the unit, the amendment provides important tenant protections.

There is rent flexibility. Sometimes the rigid section 8 rent structure just

doesn't work. In order to find a rent mechanism that works, the amendment gives PHAs flexibility in setting rents. While the calculations may be different, the amendment preserves affordability standards that limit the amount of rent a tenant pays to 30 percent of his or her income. The 30 percent threshold is sacred, because we all know that if the rent exceeds this amount, tenants lose the ability to make ends meet.

When we move to a new funding formula, PHAs will need sufficient reserves to allow them to make the change smoothly and with little disruption for tenants. H.R. 1851 provides a 1-month reserve for the first year of the formula. But to ensure that PHAs are able to serve additional families in the formula's first year, the amendment moderately increases this reserve from the 1-month level to the 1½-month level. This ensures PHAs will have adequate funds to transition.

The amendment corrects the disparity between the calculation of the administrative fees for project-based units owned by PHAs and other units in the PHA's inventory. Units owned by PHAs would receive the same fee as other units receiving project-based assistance in the PHA's inventory, providing an incentive for PHAs to create housing opportunities by project-basing its own units.

The amendment also addresses HUD's problematic implementation of Limitation of English Proficiency requirements. The manager's amendment seeks to remedy this problem. The amendment calls for HUD to convene a task force of interested parties and stakeholders who will determine the documents that need to be translated, and to make these translations available in various languages within 6 months. HUD is also required to maintain a housing information resource center, including a 24-hour toll-free number and a document clearinghouse.

We also include Housing Innovation Program, that is HIP program, formerly known as Moving to Work, and this amendment makes several corrections to the Housing Innovation Program formerly called Moving to Work. These changes clarify that troubled agencies are not eligible to participate in the program, clarifies resident participation requirements, specifies job opportunities to be made for residents, and ensures that following demolition or replacement of public housing units, that families cannot be screened out of public housing unless they are otherwise ineligible under Federal law.

I ask support for the manager's amendment.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I would like to thank Chairwoman WATERS for her manager's amendment and, in particular, the 12.5 percent for the transition in the public housing.

Madam Chair, I yield to my colleague, Mr. MILLER of California, for the balance of the time.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I want to thank you for including my language on reform in the manager's amendment. This I believe goes a long way to create innovation in helping people gain self-sufficiency.

The main reason I want to speak today is because many on my side have a real problem with the requirement that language be translated into a language that anybody who might come to a HUD assistance program might require to speak, and your bill goes a long way.

I have consistently supported every effort to repeal President Clinton's executive order which requires any recipient of Federal funds to provide translations into any language an individual requesting service may speak; but recently, HUD has issued a requirement that says that any housing authority or PHA must provide this translation to individuals who come before them.

This is the Federal Government creating a mandate and requiring the private sector to pay the bill. And what you are doing I wholeheartedly support. You are saying that if the Federal Government wants to require a mandate, then they should pay the bill. It has been estimated that one of these translations can cost a section 8 individual or group or housing authority up to $10,000 for each language they want to translate the documents into, and what you are doing is absolutely correct. If we are not going to change the law, then let's not have an unfunded mandate placed on the private sector that the private sector has to pay for when HUD and the Federal Government wants to mandate it. And what you are saying is: HUD, if you want to mandate it, you pick up the bill. And I think that is very important that we do this, and I want to stand up saying I wholeheartedly support it.

I do not support the mandate, period, that Clinton imposed, but we are stuck with it. It is an executive order. And what you are saying is the private sector should not be suffering the burden of an unfunded mandate if the Federal Government wants to mandate it.

So I want to clarify for my side that what we are doing here is saying we are relieving an unfunded mandate on the private sector and placing the burden on the Federal Government, who should be responsible. And if we want to change the law, let's change the law. But until we change the law, the private sector should not suffer the burden of financing something the Federal Government is imposing on them.

I wholeheartedly support the manager's amendment, and I thank you for working with me on rent reform and other things.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentleman has given a very clear statement of what is in here. This bill does not create the bilingual mandate; it puts it where it should be.

The other thing I would say is this, and I understand there are some who oppose it on principle. But from the court's standpoint, having HUD do the translation of all these documents means that they don't have to be done individually. So it also is cheaper for HUD to do. It is not just that it is more appropriate for the Federal Government to do it, but it is cheaper, because there will be some basic HUD documents so this will avoid the unnecessary duplication of translations. And I thank the gentleman for that very clear way he stated it.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Reclaiming my time, I think you are right. It is cheaper for us to pay for shipping than it is for them to pay for translations. Let's do it one time, ship the documents, and we deal with the problem, unless we want to change the law.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentleman and I are of a similar generation. It is my understanding from some of my younger staffers that they don't ship documents these days; they have other ways of getting them there. I couldn't send one, myself, and my friend couldn't receive it. But, fortunately, it wouldn't be up to us.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Reclaiming my time, we dinosaurs have to speak in the language we are accustomed to.

And with that, this dinosaur yields back the balance of his time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman from California has 30 seconds remaining.

Ms. WATERS. Madam Chairman, I ask for support for the manager's amendment to H.R. 1851 and passage of the bill. Again, I want to thank each of my colleagues who worked on this important amendment for their strong support.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), as modified.

The amendment, as modified, was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MS. VELÁZQUEZ

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 110–227.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 2 offered by Ms. VELÁZQUEZ:

Page 80, line 5, after ''8(o)(7)'' insert ''and section 8(o)(20)''.

Page 81, after line 10, insert the following:

''(N) Sections 8(ee) and 6(u) (relating to records, certification and confidentiality regarding domestic violence).''.

Page 81, line 11, strike ''(N)'' and insert ''(O)''.

Page 81, line 13, strike ''(O)'' and insert ''(P)''.

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The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, let me first commend Chairman FRANK and Chairwoman WATERS for their leadership in moving this necessary reform forward. They led the Financial Services Committee through a healthy but complicated series of issues and produced a bill that truly improves the section 8 program.

Section 8 is the Nation's largest low-income housing program. It currently enables more than 2 million low-income families to fulfill the basic needs of shelter. We should strive to help more people find safe and decent housing. That is why this bill includes 100,000 new vouchers over the next 5 years. It is critical that we support this bipartisan work that transitions people out of poverty.

Keeping people safe is at the heart of my amendment, which may seem minor, but provides important eviction and privacy protection for victims of domestic violence who live in section 8 housing. Let us not allow domestic violence victims to fall through the cracks.

It does this by ensuring that residents are not evicted simply because they are victims of domestic violence. While it is hard to believe, under current law, if a resident is visited by a former spouse, a stalker or domestic abuser, and he breaks down the door, the very noise and property damage caused by the dispute could be grounds for her to be evicted. Being abused should not be cause for terminating a lease. My amendment changes that by protecting section 8 tenants from wrongful eviction.

It is fundamentally wrong to evict a resident because they have been victimized. The individuals and their families deserve our respect and understanding. This provision ensures that domestic violence victims have a safe home for them and their families.

Second, my amendment protects the record of domestic violence victims. If certain identifying characteristics are made public, even to a prospective landlord, abusers could use the information to locate their victims. This goes beyond just name and Social Security number. The key is making sure that their information is protected so that victims move forward without the fear of being found. Their safety must be first and foremost. Let's give section 8 tenants basic protections to ensure they can find and keep a safe home away from violence.

Madam Chairwoman, I support the improvements to the section 8 program that H.R. 1851 makes and want to thank Chairman FRANK and Chairwoman WATERS again for their diligence on this bill. I think it is important that we remember that finding a home entails feeling safe, not just securing shelter.

In 2005, we fought in unison to protect domestic violence victims through VAWA; 415 Members of the 109th Congress supported these provisions back then. Today I am asking you to close a potential loophole for section 8 housing residents who are victims of domestic violence. I urge a ''yes'' vote on my amendment and the underlying bill.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition to the amendment, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Violence Against Women Act reauthorized and signed into law by President Bush in 2005 ensured that victims of domestic violence would not be evicted from public or section 8 housing for screaming for help, for calling the police or simply for being the victim of a crime. However, one provision of H.R. 1851 inadvertently removes these protections from certain public housing authorities, leaving victims in these housing authorities with inconsistent or no protection.

I think that the Housing Innovation Program provisions in SEVRA exempt high-performing public housing authorities from certain Federal regulations, giving them a measure of regulatory reform. Unfortunately, some of the VAWA protections were among those that would no longer apply to these high-performing housing authorities. This would create confusion for public housing authorities and leave victims vulnerable to eviction after an assault.

I support the amendment, and appreciate this being added to the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. I thank the gentlelady for supporting my amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chair, I ask unanimous consent that I be substituted for the gentlewoman from California as the manager for the remainder of the bill.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. GARY G. MILLER OF CALIFORNIA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 3 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chair, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 3 offered by Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California:

Page 28, after line 11, insert the following new section:

SEC. 6. TIME LIMITATION ON ASSISTANCE.

Section 16 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n), as amended by the preceding provisions of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g) TIME LIMITATION ON SECTION 8 ASSISTANCE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this subsection and notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, assistance under section 8 may not be provided on behalf of any family that includes a member who has previously been provided such assistance for 84 months (whether or not consecutive) or longer.

''(2) EXCEPTION FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED FAMILIES.—In determining the number of months for which an individual has been provided assistance under section 8, for purposes of paragraph (1), a public housing agency shall disregard any month during which such individual was a member of a disabled or elderly family so assisted.

''(3) AUTHORITY FOR HARDSHIP EXEMPTIONS.—A public housing agency may exempt a family from the application of paragraph (1) by reason of hardship, subject to the following requirements:

''(A) The agency shall define the reasons for, and terms under which, a hardship exemption may be granted, which may include mental illness and disability that is not sufficient to qualify the individual for benefits under the program of supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act.

''(B) The agency shall establish a plan to provide appropriate case management planning and services for the families for which such an exemption is granted.

''(4) LIMITATION ON EXEMPTIONS.—Subject to paragraph (5), the average monthly number of families with respect to which an exemption is made under paragraph (3) by a public housing agency shall not exceed 20 percent of the average monthly number of families on behalf of whom assistance is provided under section 8 during the fiscal year or the immediately preceding fiscal year (but not both), as the agency may elect.

''(5) REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL EXEMPTIONS.—Upon the request of a public housing agency, the Secretary may increase the number of families with respect to which an exemption may be made under paragraph (3) by the agency above the limitation provided in paragraph (4).

''(6) APPLICABILITY.—In determining the number of months for which an individual has been provided assistance under section 8, for purposes of paragraph (1), a public housing agency shall disregard any month that commenced before the date of the enactment

of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chair, I rise today to offer an amendment with my colleague from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) to limit the amount of time a section 8 recipient may receive housing assistance.

I believe this amendment offers a reasonable approach to a very difficult issue. The intent of this amendment is not to be harsh or uncaring. If you read the amendment, you will see that we provide exemptions for the elderly, for the disabled and for hardship.

This amendment is an attempt to inject fairness into this program, where we are faced with the fiscal reality that we do not have the resources to provide unlimited housing assistance to all those who want to participate in the program.

This amendment will help those who have been waiting a long time for their turn for the helping hand.

When we started working on section 8 reform legislation a couple of years ago, I asked my staff to review all the casework inquiries we had received from constituents about the section 8 program. This review revealed that section 8 recipients weren't contacting me to help them with problems with their housing or HUD regulations; the constituents who had contacted my office were complaining about the fact that they had been on the section 8 waiting list for years and were just as in need as those who are receiving assistance currently.

According to HUD, the average length of time families spend on the waiting list for subsidized housing in the United States is more than 2 years. In cities like Los Angeles, the waiting list is approaching 10 years.

How can we justify a situation where one person is given unlimited Federal housing assistance, while another who might have greater need is on the waiting list and unable to participate in the program for almost 10 years?

The answer is not to allow this program to continue to grow out of control by providing more vouchers. Rather, we must reform the program so that participants can transition into self-sufficiency within a reasonable period of time.

The answer is to institute a reasonable time limit for assistance, which would give more families the ability to benefit from our Nation's temporary helping hand.

The amendment I offer today is based on the successful reform we made to the welfare program in 1996. Under the amendment, the maximum amount of time during which a family may receive section 8 assistance is 7 years. Time limits would not apply to elderly or disabled families.

In addition, there is a hardship exemption for families who need extra time due to circumstances beyond their control.

While some might argue that we should increase the number of section 8 vouchers that are available so we can serve all those who are on the waiting list, the practical reality is that we cannot already sustain the growth in the current section 8 program. Our aim should be not to expand the program more but instead reform it to allow it to provide assistance to more people.

Even with the section 8 program growing out of control, it is not helping all the people that it could. This amendment is one way to ensure that our Federal limited resources may be used to help all those who need help.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chair, I rise to claim the time in opposition. And unlike my distinguished friend, the gentlewoman from Illinois, I'm really in opposition.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I yield myself 3 minutes.

First, Madam Chair, in the interest of conciliation that has marked this debate, I would say to my friend from California, I would be willing to accept this amendment that puts a time limit on people being able to stay in section 8 if we could work out a time limit on their being poor. I think it is entirely accurate that when you're no longer poor, you should no longer be able to live in section 8. But what if we can't?

I can understand people who think that there are adults who have not been very responsible in their life choices, but some of the adults come with children. The gentleman exempts the disabled and the elderly, but his amendment does not exempt families with small children. So you have a parent with children.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. The intent of this amendment is to allow for hardship cases like that. A single mother who has young children would be a hardship.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Would the gentleman point that out to me in the amendment?

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. We tried to allow the Housing Authority——

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. No. They have a certain number. They can make certain exemptions up to 20 percent.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. On page 2, hardship exemption, number 3. It allows the housing authority to create exemptions for families in a hardship. And that would be one of the exemptions.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Yes, not exceeding more than 20 percent of the families. It doesn't single out children. Well, maybe there will be 30 or 40 percent, because in my experience, it may differ, you say make an exception for a hardship. That's not the exception for people in section 8; it's the rule. There aren't a lot of rich people living in section 8 or middle income people.

The fact is that under the gentleman's amendment, if adopted, there will be single parents with children of 7 or 8 or 10 years old, several of them, and at the end of 5 years, they'll have to move. Those kids didn't do anything to anybody.

And you know what we've learned from education and from homelessness, 7 years, the gentleman tells me. He does give them 7 years. It's very biblical. But they'll still have to move after 7 years.

Churning poor people isn't useful. Making people move isn't useful. We've adopted some rules here. The gentleman knows we agreed with him that we should not charge them for more rent if they're making more money. We don't want to have a disincentive. We've done other things to improve it.

But here's a fundamental point. People in section 8 housing are there because they meet strict income criteria. Under the gentleman's amendment, someone who continues to be poor, who continues to meet the income criteria, who has lived up to every rule, who has small children, who has tried diligently to get a better job, but in many parts of this country, by the way, we're talking about working people. There are many people who can work full-time at twice the minimum wage and not be able to afford rental housing in his district or in parts of my district or in other districts, the gentlewoman from California's district. And they'd be evicted. They'd be evicted from housing that they were eligible for, for no reason other than the clock.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I yield the balance of time to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 2½ minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would just note that I don't think we are doing those kids living in section 8 housing any favors by encouraging a life or a lifestyle of living in section 8 housing. I think we're doing them a great disservice.

And I want to thank the gentleman from California for his efforts to bring more accountability and responsibility to the section 8 program, a program that, let's face it, is in need of fundamental reform.

Madam Chair, this is a very straightforward and commonsense amendment, and again, I want to commend the gentleman for offering it. It would simply place a time limit, one that I believe is generous, on able-bodied individuals currently receiving housing assistance through the section 8 program.

Under current law, there are no time limits. Those on section 8 can remain on section 8 for as long as they qualify.

Is that fair to the taxpayers? No. Is it fair to the section 8 recipients who become trapped in a life of dependency or to their children? I don't think so. Is it fair that the current lack of time limits prevent those on the waiting list, who may have fallen on hard times and are genuinely looking for a temporary helping hand, from receiving help? I don't think so.

Madam Chair, I would submit that the current lack of time limits isn't fair to anyone.

We've seen the positive effects that time limits and work requirements can have on social programs. We need look no further back in history than the 1996 Temporary Assistance For Needy Families, or the welfare reform law, that reformed the old welfare system, a system that had trapped so many into a life of dependency and poverty. And the old welfare system bears a remarkable resemblance to the section 8 program. And I think that's just unacceptable.

We can do better in this country than section 8 housing and condemning both adults and children to the conditions that they have to live in, in my community in Cincinnati or communities all over the country. Section 8 housing is not the type of lifestyle that I think we want to condemn those people living in them or their children to.

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And I don't think the taxpayers ought to be required to pay for this subsidized housing forever in some cases.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CHABOT. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. I think, Mr. FRANK, you know my heart, and you and I have worked on a lot of stuff. I think Mr. CHABOT and I would be willing to accept a 50-percent exemption for single mothers with multiple children who have a hardship, who are unable to move in the sector. So we are willing to cooperate. We are not trying to throw mothers with children out of the home.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, I would say to my friend from California, work on that in a future amendment and we will look at it.

But I want to address the gentleman from Ohio. He says he wants to help these people and save them. Boy, would they be in trouble if somebody came to hurt them. He is going to help them by evicting them when they remain economically eligible. And he says it is encouraging dependence.

In fact, in many parts of this country, you can be making two and three times the minimum wage and not be able to afford decent rental housing, and that is who gets the section 8.

And then he says that section 8 housing is so terrible that we have to keep people from having to live there. But does the gentleman think that there are people who say, ''You know what? I can live in a nice place or I can live in a lousy place. I think I'll choose a lousy place until the gentleman from Ohio comes along and rescues me from it''?

People live in the best place available to them, and throwing them out of the place they now live in when they have done nothing wrong because you don't think it is good enough for them when there is no alternative that is as good is hardly helping them.

The section 8 program is one that serves many people who work. It is a sliding scale of subsidy, and to say that it encourages dependency totally misunderstands the program. Many of these people are people who are working and they work at low-wage jobs in areas with high rent. How are you encouraging dependency by telling them and their children that after 7 years they go out? What kind of an incentive is that?

So, Madam Chairman, this amendment takes people who have already been in some economic difficulty and makes their lives harder. I hope that it is rejected.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California. Madam Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MR. MARKEY

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 4 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 4 offered by Mr. MARKEY:

Page 64, line 20, before ''Subparagraph'' insert ''(a) TREATMENT OF UNIT AND FAMILY SIZE.—''.

Page 65, after line 2, insert the following:

(b) ELIGIBILITY OF CERTAIN PROJECTS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law—

(1) the property known as The Heritage Apartments (FHA No. 023-44804), in Malden, Massachusetts, shall be considered eligible low-income housing for purposes of the eligibility of residents of the property for enhanced voucher assistance under section 8(t) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(t)), pursuant to paragraph (2)(A) of section 223(f) of the Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990 (12 U.S.C. 4113(f)(2)(A));

(2) such residents shall receive enhanced rental housing vouchers upon the prepayment of the mortgage loan for the property under section 236 of the National Housing Act (12 U.S.C. 1715z–1); and

(3) the Secretary shall approve such prepayment and subsequent transfer of the property without any further condition, except that the property shall be restricted for occupancy, until the original maturity date of the prepaid mortgage loan, only by families with incomes not exceeding 80 percent of the adjusted median income for the area in which the property is located, as published by the Secretary.

Amounts for the enhanced vouchers pursuant to this subsection shall be provided under amounts appropriated for tenant-based rental assistance otherwise authorized under section 8(t) of the United States Housing Act of 1937.

Page 107, after line 2, insert the following new section:

SEC. 18. TRANSFER OF CERTAIN RENTAL ASSISTANCE CONTRACTS.

(a) TRANSFER.—Subject to subsection (c) and notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, at the request of the owner, transfer or authorize the transfer, of the contracts, restrictions, and debt described in subsection (b)—

(1) on the housing that is owned or managed by Community Properties of Ohio Management Services LLC or an affiliate of Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing and located in Franklin County, Ohio, to other properties located in Franklin County, Ohio; and

(2) on the housing that is owned or managed by The Model Group, Inc., and located in Hamilton County, Ohio, to other properties located in Hamilton County, Ohio.

(b) CONTRACTS, RESTRICTIONS, AND DEBT COVERED.—The contracts, restrictions, and debt described in this subsection are as follows:

(1) All or a portion of a project-based rental assistance housing assistance payments contract under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f).

(2) Existing Federal use restrictions, including without limitation use agreements, regulatory agreements, and accommodation agreements.

(3) Any subordinate debt held by the Secretary or assigned and any mortgages securing such debt, all related loan and security documentation and obligations, and reserve and escrow balances.

(c) RETENTION OF SAME NUMBER OF UNITS AND AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—Any transfer pursuant to subsection (a) shall result in—

(1) a total number of dwelling units (including units retained by the owners and units transferred) covered by assistance described in subsection (b)(1) after the transfer remaining the same as such number assisted before the transfer, with such increases or decreases in unit sizes as may be contained in a plan approved by a local planning or development commission or department; and

(2) no reduction in the total amount of the housing assistance payments under contracts described in subsection (b)(1).

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I rise with an amendment that I am making in conjunction with the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE). Our

language seeks to make some technical corrections to ensure that affordable housing is preserved in three housing developments, two located in Ohio and one in Massachusetts.

The low-income tenants of the Heritage Apartments in Malden, Massachusetts, are facing possible displacement once an outstanding HUD mortgage is fully paid in a few years. The development is also in need of major renovations and upgrades that simply cannot be delayed. Unfortunately, HUD is failing to ensure that the development remains affordable and livable by placing burdensome regulations and restrictions on prepayment of the outstanding mortgage and subsequent transfer to a new owner who is willing to finance the renovations. My amendment would allow income-eligible residents to qualify for enhanced housing vouchers following the prepayment of the HUD mortgage and the property transfer and directs HUD to approve such actions.

I will defer to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) to explain the portion of our amendment which deals with maintaining affordability in housing developments located in her congressional district in Ohio.

The Congressional Budget Office has determined that adoption of this language would result in $1 million in net savings to current mandatory spending over the next 5 years because HUD is currently paying mortgage interest reduction payments for the development which would be nullified upon adoption of the Markey-Pryce amendment.

The amendment is supported by the chairman of the committee and the ranking member. It is also supported by the Institute of Real Estate Management, National Apartment Association, and the National Association of Home Builders. And I urge adoption of the amendment.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MARKEY. I yield to the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, I thank my friend and colleague for yielding.

And I want to say, as I said to the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL), people are saying why are you making this exception. We are making this exception because we think this ought to be the rule. And we are dealing with this now because we have time problems in this area and in the area of the gentlewoman from Ohio. But it is our intention to pass legislation before the end of the year, I think on a bipartisan basis, that will make this a rule for the whole country. So this is not singling out any one area except for the fact that we face time restraints, as the gentleman from California did and the gentleman from Ohio did.

So I want to thank my friend for bringing this forward. And I want to make it clear this is the first step of what we believe will be a general policy of preserving affordable housing.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time in opposition to the amendment, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, the gentlewoman from Ohio is unable to get here in the length of time needed, so I would just say that we support the amendment.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the Markey/Pryce amendment to H.R. 1851.

This amendment includes important language, which I authored, to permit the transfer of project-based Section 8 rent assistance from concentrated, blight-ridden areas in Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio to less precarious, rehabilitated living conditions. The affected neighborhoods all have high poverty rates, a high number of assisted housing units, high crime rates, and dilapidated buildings.

This transfer would have no additional cost to the Federal Government. The language preserves the exact same number of assisted units and the same dollar amount of Federal assistance.

The benefits to the community and to the tenants are immeasurable. Though struggling, each of these neighborhoods has seen an increasing amount of public and private scrutiny and investment. Low income and other residents alike would share in the benefits of a safer, more stable, and more thriving neighborhood. This proposal would allow the community to find more productive and beneficial uses for the properties.

This proposal has widespread support from both communities. Tenants, community advocates, government officials, and private developers alike—all support the neighborhoods' improvement.

Madam Speaker, I would not be here today if for the past 6 years in Columbus the community had not explored other possible solutions with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, tenants, advocates, the City of Columbus, the Ohio State University officials, contractors, and other key stakeholders, but statutory restrictions constantly impeded progress.

We find ourselves here, not as a first resort, but as a last.

I would like to thank Chairman FRANK and Ranking Member BACHUS for their support, and my colleague from Massachusetts for working with me to enact this important fix into law.

I thank my colleagues for consideration of this amendment and urge your support.

Mr. BIGGERT. Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. CHABOT

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 5 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 5 offered by Mr. CHABOT:

Page 107, strike lines 3 through 9.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This is one of three amendments that I am offering this evening, two of the three with a couple of my colleagues, one Mr. MILLER from California and Mr. HENSARLING from Texas, that would encourage fundamental reforms in the section 8 program.

When we committed ourselves to welfare reform, it was the understanding that the program should no longer be a taxpayer-funded handout but should instead offer people a way out of poverty, helping them obtain job and education skills that are needed to become ultimately self-sufficient. Ending welfare's cycle of dependency has cut the welfare rolls in half, promoted individual responsibility, and saved billions of tax dollars in the process. Sadly, current housing programs closely resemble the failed welfare policies of the past. Like the old welfare programs, the section 8 housing program, unfortunately, discourages work and allows people to stay, in fact, encourages them to stay on the program, oftentimes indefinitely. It is also too often mismanaged by local governments or local housing authorities.

Unfortunately, this bill does not address those issues but instead expands the program to 100,000 new section 8 vouchers at the cost of approximately 2.4 billion taxpayer dollars over the next 5 years. That is 100,000, approximately, more recipients that get a chunk of the rent that is ultimately going to be picked up by their fellow taxpayers and ultimately, in my view, doesn't do the people that become dependent upon this good in the long term. That is 100,000 more recipients who don't have to work to stay in the program, and that is 100,000 recipients that are being supported by the American taxpayers for as long as they like since section 8 now imposes no time limits on the beneficiaries.

I represent most of the city of Cincinnati and its western suburbs and a few townships in Butler County, Ohio. Too many neighborhoods in my district have had to witness crime, despair, and hopelessness that are inherent in a government program that asks virtually nothing of its recipients, that encourages dependency rather than responsibility and waste, unfortunately, rather than work. Whether it is the

funding provided by the Federal Government or mismanagement of the program by local governments and agencies, section 8 has failed those who use it and those who pay for it: the American taxpayers.

My amendment is straightforward. It would simply stop throwing good money after bad and seeks to prevent more Americans from falling victim to a life of dependency on the government. My amendment would simply prohibit the dollars this bill authorizes from being spent on the 100,000 new vouchers that this legislation would create.

It is also important to point out that the dependency that section 8 has created is so great that there are long waiting lists to get vouchers. Why? Because many of those who gain access to the program ultimately don't leave. They don't really have an incentive to. The average stay is about 7 years.

Madam Chairman, if we simply put time limits and meaningful work requirements in the program, as the amendments that I have offered with Mr. MILLER and Mr. HENSARLING would do, there wouldn't be a need to create more vouchers because people would be moving through the system, moving toward independence and a better life, and that nondependence on the government is what every American should want.

Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chairman, I rise to claim the time in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chairman, allow me to first thank the chairperson of the Financial Services Committee, Chairperson Frank. He has done an outstanding job with his leadership. I also thank the Honorable MAXINE WATERS, the subcommittee chairperson, for her sound stewardship; and, of course, Ranking Member BACHUS for his bipartisanship because it helped to synthesize this piece of legislation. And I also thank the cosponsorship of Congresswoman BIGGERT. She has been cogent with her cosponsorship.

Madam Chairman, let me simply say that this is bipartisan legislation that we are talking about and the striking of the 100,000 vouchers over 5 years will put an end to what started as bipartisan legislation in the committee. This was passed overwhelmingly in the committee, and it was supported by the ranking member of the committee.

This is not, as was indicated, a handout. It is really a hand up for the disabled. It is a hand up for the elderly. And it also benefits low-income to extremely low-income persons, many of whom are working and still not in a position to afford affordable housing. Many of them need the kind of help that this bill is providing.

The truth is, and you shall know the truth, and it will set you free. So at this moment, I am going to take the ax of truth, slam it into the tree of circumstance, and let the chips fall wherever they may. The truth is one in seven households in this country spends more than 50 percent of their income on housing. Three-quarters of a million people are homeless on any given night in this country. Congress has not provided new section 8 vouchers since 2002. The truth is we can pay for one of these vouchers with 2 seconds of what we spend on the war in Iraq. We can pay for all of these vouchers with what we spend on 2½ days in Iraq. The truth is the need exists for these vouchers. The truth is it is time for Congress to act and to authorize these new section 8 vouchers.

Madam Chairman, at this time I would like to yield 1 minute to my outstanding colleague Congressman CHRIS MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Madam Chairman, I thank my friend for his great work on this issue.

I think it is important to address the concept presented by our friends on the other side of the aisle that the folks who are the recipients of these vouchers are victims. Well, they might be victims, but they are victims of an economy which says to far too many people out in this world that if you play by the rules, if you do everything we ask of you, if you go out and get a job, a full-time regular job, that you are still going to be living in poverty, that you are still going to need a little help to be able to survive in this world.

□ 2045

In a high-cost-of-living State and a high-cost-of-housing State like Connecticut, 5,000 vouchers does not do it for the working poor there. We have people in our neck of the woods that are paying 60, 70, 80 percent of their income, hard-earned income on rent.

We are a part of the world that desperately needs more section 8 housing vouchers to help the working poor, the people who are doing everything this society asks them to do. But because we live in an economy where wages are stagnant and the cost of living continues to rise, a program like this is a very valuable and needed helping hand.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chair, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas has 1½ minutes remaining; the gentleman from Ohio also has 1½ minutes remaining.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chair, I believe I would retain the right to speak last and continue to reserve.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Madam Chairman, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. The gentleman is a member of the committee defending the committee's product. I believe he has the right to close; is that correct?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is correct. The gentleman from Texas has the right to close.

Mr. CHABOT. That being the case, Madam Chair, I give myself such time as I have remaining.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chair, I would just like to reiterate the fact that I don't think we're doing either the children or the people that have become dependent on section 8 housing any favors by allowing, number one, the area that we covered in the last amendment, people to remain on section 8 housing indefinitely. I think that the time limit that's been proposed in the previous amendment is certainly a step in the right direction. The amendment that we have following this goes to a work requirement, which I think is also very reasonable in a program such as this.

I think encouraging people to remain dependent upon the government in the conditions that oftentimes we see in section 8 housing is doing no favor for those families, and that's why I think this is an appropriate amendment, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Madam Chair, it is beyond my comprehension to conclude that because people are working and in need of housing assistance, they should be evicted from the very assistance they are paying for because they don't make enough money to move to a better home.

I'm doing this not only for the people of my district, but I'm also doing this for the people in my colleague's district as well, because he has a deficit of 13,177 rental units for persons who are in need of this type of affordable housing.

This is not housing for those who don't need it and who are not qualified. The elderly need it. The persons who are with low-income and very low-income need it, and those who are disabled. And for edification purposes, when we talk about persons with extremely low income, we are talking about persons who make at or below 30 percent of the area median income. And many of these persons are using 50 percent of what they earn on housing.

So, Madam Chair, I am appreciative of what the gentleman has offered, but I'm going to ask persons to please vote against this amendment and vote for the disabled, vote for the elderly, vote so that persons with low income and extremely low income can have affordable housing.

Madam Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. CHABOT. Madam Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MR. HENSARLING

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 6 printed in House Report 110–227.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 6 offered by Mr. HENSARLING:

Page 107, after line 9, insert the following new section:

SEC. 19. WORK REQUIREMENT FOR THOSE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FOR 7 YEARS OR MORE.

Section 16 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437n), as amended by the preceding provisions of this Act, is further amendment by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(g) WORK REQUIREMENT FOR ASSISTED FAMILIES RECEIVING SECTION 8 ASSISTANCE FOR 7 YEARS OR MORE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this subsection and notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, assistance under section 8 may not be provided on behalf of any family who has previously been provided such assistance for 84 consecutive months or more, unless each member of the family who is 18 years of age or older performs not fewer than 20 hours of approved work activities (as such term is defined in section 407(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 607(d))).

''(2) EXEMPTION.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall provide an exemption from the applicability of paragraph (1) for any individual family member who—

''(A) is 62 years of age or older;

''(B) is a blind or disabled individual, as defined under section 216(i)(1) or 1614 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 416(i)(1); 1382c), and who is unable to comply with this section, or is a primary caretaker of such individual;

''(C) is engaged in a work activity (as such term is defined in section 407(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 607(d)), as in effect on and after July 1, 1997));

''(D) meets the requirements for being exempted from having to engage in a work activity under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or under any other welfare program of the State in which the public housing agency administering rental assistance described in subsection (a) is located, including a State-administered welfare-to-work program;

''(E) is in a family receiving assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or under any other welfare program of the State in which the public housing agency administering such rental assistance is located, including a State-administered welfare-to-work program, and has not been found by the State or other administering entity to be in noncompliance with such program; or

''(F) is a single custodial parent caring for a child who has not attained 6 years of age, and the individual proves that the individual has a demonstrated inability (as determined by the State) to obtain needed child care, for one or more of the following reasons:

''(i) Unavailability of appropriate child care within a reasonable distance from the individual's home or work site.

''(ii) Unavailability or unsuitability of informal child care by a relative or under other arrangements.

''(iii) Unavailability of appropriate and affordable formal child care arrangements.

''(3) ADMINISTRATION.—A public housing agency providing rental assistance described in paragraph (1) may administer the work activities requirement under this subsection directly, through a resident organization, or through a contractor having experience in administering work activities programs within the service area of the public housing agency. The Secretary may establish qualifications for such organizations and contractors.

''(4) PROSPECTIVE APPLICABILITY.—In determining the number of months for which an assisted family has been provided assistance under section 8, for purposes of paragraph (1), a public housing agency shall disregard any month that commenced before the date of the enactment of the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act of 2007.''.

Page 39, line 18, strike ''and''.

Page 39, after line 18, insert the following:

''(v) include an amount for the costs of administering the work activities requirement under section 16(g); and''.

Page 39, line 19, strike ''(v)'' and insert ''(vi)''.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 534, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today to offer an amendment with my good friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), who just offered the previous amendment, and I certainly associate myself with his efforts on the previous amendment.

This amendment represents what many of us consider to be a very, very important principle, and that fundamental important principle is if you're an able-bodied adult under the age of 62 receiving means-tested Federal assistance, you ought to be on the road to self-sufficiency. That's what this amendment is all about, and that's what the principle is. This, we believe, will further encourage people to make the transition from dependency upon section 8 rental assistance to self-sufficiency. Not only is that important to them, it's important to the taxpayer who we're asking to pick up the tab. And this is, I believe, over a $2 billion bill.

Now, specifically, our amendment would require people receiving section 8 rental assistance for 7 consecutive years to perform a certain amount of work-related activities, which includes work, looking for work, job training, education and a host of other activities that are reflected in the TANF statute, which we mirror. There are a number of exemptions. It exempts those under age 18, over the age of 62, blind, disabled, those already working, already exempt under TANF, single parents of children under six who are unable to find appropriate child care.

Over 10 years ago, the Nation embarked on a bold new experiment with TANF, and we said that Federal assistance should be temporary and based on work and self-sufficiency and responsibility and personal dignity. That is a principle. Now many naysayers then said that it was mean. They said it was unworkable. Some even implied it was racist. Well, they were wrong then, and they are wrong now. Under TANF, the number of families receiving cash welfare steadily declined from a peak of 5.1 million families in March of 1994 to 1.9 million families. Child poverty has fallen dramatically. The employment of young single mothers has doubled, and the employment of mothers who have never been married is up by more than 50 percent.

Now, the lessons are clear. But we didn't finish the job 10 years ago, and we should finish it. Again, this is a vote on a very simple principle. If you're an able-bodied adult receiving means-tested Federal assistance, should you be on the road to self-sufficiency? I believe the answer is yes.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Madam Chair, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. We have just heard the gentleman from Texas lay out a scenario that is ripe full of holes. This amendment is drastic. It is costly. It is inefficient. It affects all families and individuals currently using a voucher or living in section 8 project-based housing. It's impossible to administer. Even HUD and the administration itself has not even requested it. It imposes a new unfunded mandate on private sector landlords owning Federally assisted housing, forcing them to assume the role of a welfare agency.

The gentleman talks about a boom on the taxpayers. This imposes a significant cost to taxpayers by raising the costs incurred by public housing.

And I have in my hands a letter from just about every housing and real estate and housing association in this country saying, in effect, that we are not able to support the Hensarling amendment.

Most exemplary of the ridiculousness of this amendment is that he asks for 20 hours of work, but doesn't say how, doesn't say when. Twenty hours when? Twenty hours a week? Twenty hours a month? Twenty hours a year? There is no way to administer it.

But Madam Chair, what is so hurtful to me about this amendment; yes, it is mean-spirited. But not only is it mean-spirited, my friend, it is, indeed, bigoted. It is, yes, a bigoted amendment. Let me tell you why. It reflects a very

stereotypical negative view of certain economic racial groups of poor people, poor families, because it singles them out for an ill-defined work requirement that does not apply to other families and individuals receiving Federal assistance.

This amendment needs to be dealt with for what it really is, and quite honestly, it is an insult to the Congress of the United States. And I submit it is even beneath the dignity of the Congress of the United States to even entertain this amendment.

Madam Chair, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLEAVER), and I reserve the balance of my time to close.

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Chair, I would ask to enter into a colloquy with the gentleman from Texas regarding his amendment on this bill. As probably the only person who lived in section 8, I may not be opposed to it; I would just like to get some questions, if I might.

If the gentleman would please help me on this. Are you proposing to amend section 8 or TANF?

Mr. HENSARLING. Section 8, if the gentleman will yield.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you. Because all of the information that your staff sent out contains information about TANF, and you just spoke quite extensively about TANF.

Mr. HENSARLING. Will the gentleman yield for an explanation?

Mr. CLEAVER. I can't yield because I don't have enough time. But most everything you've said was TANF.

The other two questions that I will ask very quickly is, if a person lives in public housing or section 8, does it mean that they're on welfare?

Mr. HENSARLING. I'm sorry. Would the gentleman repeat the question?

Mr. CLEAVER. If you are living in public housing or section 8, does it also mean that you are on welfare? And if so, which law will HUD enforce, the TANF regulation or the amended section 8 regulation which you propose?

Mr. HENSARLING. If the gentleman will yield?

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. I will yield to the gentleman to respond.

Mr. HENSARLING. I thank the gentleman from Georgia.

This particular amendment mirrors the TANF statute, and so there may be confusion there.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Missouri's time has expired.

Mr. CLEAVER. Madam Chair, my questions weren't answered, but thank you.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. May I inquire as to the balance of my time?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Georgia controls 1 minute.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. I reserve the right to close, if the gentleman from Texas has more to offer.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chair, may I inquire how much time is left on my side?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman controls 2 additional minutes.

Mr. HENSARLING. In that case, Madam Chair, I would like to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And I thank the gentleman from Texas for his efforts to bring more accountability to the section 8 program. It's much needed and long overdue.

As welfare reform has shown us, the section 8 program should not become a way of life. It should be a helping hand, a way out of poverty. Ending the welfare cycle of dependency that has trapped so many has cut the welfare rolls in half, promoted individual responsibility and saved billions of tax dollars in the process.

One of the primary engines that continues to drive the civic welfare reform is the requirement that those in the program must work, and that's all that this amendment does. To be clear, the Hensarling-Chabot amendment would simply require all able-bodied individuals who have received section 8 for more than 7 consecutive years to work. I don't see anything at all mean-spirited about that. I certainly don't see anything bigoted about that to say that if somebody is receiving tax dollars, they ought to be required to work, to do something in consideration for the tax dollars that are being paid to help that person live while they need that assistance.

So the amendment, again, as the gentleman indicates, exempts those that are under 18 years of age, that are over 62 or blind or disabled, and those already exempt under TANF, and single parents of children under six. The amendment benefits the taxpayer and those in the section 8 program.

I would urge my colleagues to vote for this amendment. It requires work, and I think that's a good thing.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas still controls a half minute.

Mr. HENSARLING. I yield myself the balance of the time.

Again, I thank the gentleman from Ohio for coming down to support this important amendment.

I continue to fail to see what is mean-spirited about asking people, after 7 years, who get means-tested assistance, to be on the road to self-sufficiency, something good for them, something good for the taxpayer.

I must admit, I really regret, Madam Chairman, that the gentleman from Georgia chose to characterize this as ''bigoted.'' Perhaps I could have taken his words down. I sense when you run out of anything else to say, you characterize someone else's motivations and you use the term ''bigoted.'' And that, I regret.

□ 2100

Madam Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Georgia is recognized for 1 minute.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Let me explain, if I may, Madam Chair, in closing. This is very personal to me. I've grown up in this country. I understand messages and I understand this message. This is a message that is targeted to a group of people, no matter how small they may be, who believe that certain people are categorized as wanting a handout, or that they are lazy, or that they don't want to work. So then the cry comes, before we can give them any help, make them work. Make them get a job.

Madam Chairman, that is what this is about. In my humble opinion, 20 hours of work, not even defined, whether it is a day, whether it is a month, whether it is a week, no requirements in it, is an unfunded mandate.

On top of that, Madam Chairman, there are already included in this bill a number of provisions to encourage work, to encourage self-sufficiency, including reduced work disincentives.

So in closing, may I say, Madam Chairman, please vote against the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order:

Amendment No. 3 by Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California.

Amendment No. 5 by Mr. CHABOT of Ohio.

Amendment No. 6 by Mr. HENSARLING of Texas.

The Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the first vote in this series.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. GARY G. MILLER OF CALIFORNIA

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. GARY G. MILLER) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 151, noes 267, not voting 18, as follows:

[Roll No. 625]

AYES—151

Aderholt
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Dent
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McHenry
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Mitchell
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Patrick
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Poe
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Regula
Rehberg
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Sullivan
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Walberg
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—267

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Akin
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Blunt
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Camp (MI)
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Ferguson
Filner
Fortuño
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (NY)
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Norton
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Perlmutter
Platts
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Rodriguez
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—18

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Culberson
Davis, Jo Ann
Faleomavaega
Hastert
Higgins
Jindal
McCrery
Miller, George
Paul
Radanovich
Shimkus
Slaughter
Stearns
Tancredo
Young (AK)

□ 2127

Messrs. WATT of North Carolina, MEEK of Florida, CAMP of Michigan, ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, ROGERS of Michigan, HOYER, KUHL of New York and Mrs. MILLER of Michigan changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

Mrs. BONO changed her vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. CHABOT

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 144, noes 277, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 626]

AYES—144

Aderholt
Akin
Bachmann
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Biggert
Bilbray
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carter
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Dent
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McHenry
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Murphy, Patrick
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Poe
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Regula
Rehberg
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schmidt
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Sullivan
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Upton
Walberg
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—277

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrow
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Burgess
Butterfield
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Ferguson
Filner
Fortuño
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick

Kind
King (NY)
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Norton
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Platts
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—15

Berkley
Burton (IN)
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Faleomavaega
Hastert
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Radanovich
Slaughter
Stearns
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (during the vote). Members are advised there are 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 2135

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MR. HENSARLING

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIRMAN. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 197, noes 222, not voting 17, as follows:

[Roll No. 627]

AYES—197

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fortuño
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hill
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Latham
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Putnam
Ramstad
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Schmidt
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Sullivan
Tanner
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—222

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bordallo
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Chandler
Christensen
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Norton
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Perlmutter
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Regula
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—17

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Faleomavaega
Hastert
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Pryce (OH)
Radanovich
Rohrabacher
Slaughter
Stearns
Tancredo
Wu
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIRMAN

The Acting CHAIRMAN (during the vote). Members are advised they have 2 minutes remaining to record their votes.

□ 2142

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Chairman, on rollcall Nos. 625, 626, and 627 I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended.

The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MCNULTY) having assumed the chair, Ms. BALDWIN, Acting Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1851) to reform the housing choice voucher program under

section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, pursuant to House Resolution 534, she reported the bill back to the House with an amendment adopted by the Committee of the Whole.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment to the amendment reported from the Committee of the Whole? If not, the question is on the amendment.

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MRS. CAPITO

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I offer a motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentlewoman opposed to the bill?

Mrs. CAPITO. I am, Mr. Speaker, in its present form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mrs. Capito moves to recommit the bill H.R. 1851 to the Committee on Financial Services with instructions that the Committee report the same back forthwith with the following amendment:

Page 107, after line 9, insert the following new section:

SEC. 19. ACCEPTABLE IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Rental housing assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 may not be provided on behalf of any individual or household unless the individual provides, or, in the case of a household, all adult members of the household provide, valid personal identification in one of the following forms:

(1) SOCIAL SECURITY CARD WITH PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD OR REAL ID ACT IDENTIFICATION.—

(A) A social security card accompanied by a photo identification card issued by the Federal Government or a State Government; or

(B) A driver's license or identification card issued by a State in the case of a State that is in compliance with title II of the REAL ID Act of 2005 (title II of division B of Public Law 109–13; 49 U.S.C. 30301 note).

(2) PASSPORT.—A passport issued by the United States or a foreign government.

(3) USCIS PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD.—A photo identification card issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security (acting through the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services).

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, by regulation, require that each public housing agency or other entity administering rental housing assistance described in subsection (a) take such actions as the Secretary considers necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from West Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, the intent of this motion to recommit is clear.

Upon adoption of this motion to recommit, we will go right to the adoption of the bill in its entirety to include the important language that ensures illegal immigrants are not benefitting from rental assistance provided by the section 8 program that is funded by the dollars of hard-working Americans.

The section 8 program has provided much needed rental assistance to low-income families who spend a high percentage of their income on housing costs since its creation in the 1970s. Today, there are approximately 2 million vouchers administered by the more than 2,500 public housing authorities in this country. The success of this program is now dominating HUD's budget, but we are looking for clear reform to ensure the viability of this program.

This motion to recommit helps strengthen the section 8 program by ensuring that illegal immigrants cannot receive assistance from this program. This measure will simply require all occupants of a housing unit, supported by section 8, to establish proof of their legal residency through the use of secure forms of identification.

There are four options here: driver's license or REAL ID card; a foreign or U.S. passport; a citizens and immigration services photo ID card; or a Social Security card in conjunction with the State or Federal photo ID. Without this addition to this bill, illegal immigrants could utilize current loopholes to secure section 8 housing benefits.

We absolutely cannot reward this illegal behavior with incentives for illegal immigrants to remain in the country in blatant violation of the law. By providing housing, we are simply encouraging the continuation of their illegal presence in our Nation. This is a form of back-door amnesty.

There have been many stories across the country highlighting examples of benefits being granted to illegal immigrants. I believe, in 2006, in Denver, Colorado alone, there were an estimated 20,000 illegal immigrants holding FHA ensured loans. Each of these cases provides further incentives for illegal immigrants to remain in our Nation violating the law.

Our Nation's immigration system is clearly broken. We must take this opportunity to strengthen a successful Federal program to ensure this benefit is only provided to legal residents.

The American people work too hard for their tax dollars to have them spent on illegal immigrants. I urge a ''yes'' vote on this motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, this bill has two parts.

One part is to reiterate what is already the law. It is already the law that only people who are in the country legally may benefit from this. The second part is how to enforce it, and what it does is to continue an unfortunate tendency that goes counter to everything we have tried to do about privacy, of making the Social Security card a universal identifier, and there are real dangers in that.

Members who have been concerned with privacy know that an unreasonable and unrestricted use of the Social Security card is a problem. Indeed, we have talked about legislation, bipartisan, to restrict the requirement that you give your Social Security number. But here is what this bill says. It does not change the law. It's already illegal for people who are not here legally to get these benefits.

The gentleman mentioned 26,000 FHA loans in Colorado, zero section 8s. I haven't heard the evidence. I would be glad to listen to it. I will invite people, if there is evidence that this is a problem with section 8, let's listen to it. But here's what you impose on the housing authorities. There is now a requirement that people show that they are here legally. But now in this legislation, if it's adopted, would narrow that.

So here is what you would have to take to get someone who wanted to get into section 8:

They could show you their passport. The number of really poor people carrying passports is less than you might imagine. Although, I don't know what they might imagine, so I take that back.

Or a USCIS photo identification card. Well, if you are a citizen born in the United States, you don't have one.

Or a driver's license. You may not have a driver's license.

So if you are an 82 year-old who doesn't travel a lot to foreign countries and you are an American citizen, what are you going to show them? Your Social Security card. What this does is put more legal emphasis behind that.

I would say to Members, Members can vote as they wish. But the next time people complain to you about privacy problems and about Social Security numbers floating around being misused, if you voted for this, say, yes, I helped, because that's what this does.

The only thing this adds to American law is a requirement that most people trying to get section 8s will have to show their Social Security card, because a lot of them won't have driver's licenses, and they won't have passports. If they are American citizens, they won't have that card. The most common form of identification required will be the Social Security card.

I have been working, the people in the Energy and Commerce Committee, the people in the Ways and Means Committee, we have all been working to restrict the idea that the Social Security card is an ID card. I thought that was fairly generally accepted, that we don't want the Social Security card to be the ID card.

What's the Federal Government saying here? Because, yes, you can say,

well, who wants to steal the identification of a poor person? You know, being up against a section 8, no big deal. But once the Federal Government, the minority has been consistently arguing, once we have stated the Social Security card is the most universally accepted, the Social Security card is considered to be the best form of identification, then what's the argument against every business in America doing it? How do you stop this from becoming that universal identifier?

Members can cover themselves by voting for something that's already in the law. It's time to cover yourself anyway; it's kind of late.

But understand what Members will be doing. They will be furthering the practice of using the Social Security card as an identifier. They will be weakening our efforts to undercut.

Members may be unhappy to understand the implications of what they are doing. But I do not think it is wise for this House to continue a pattern of saying that the Social Security card will not just be a means of checking for Social Security but will become the universal identifier, that people will have to show it. Because if we, the Federal Government, say you have to show it, then how do you tell the hotel that they can't say it? How do you tell anybody else that they can't require the production of Social Security cards?

The logical consequence of this will be a serious impediment to our efforts to protect privacy and to deal with identity theft. The unrestricted use of the Social Security card is a serious problem there, and this makes it worse.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote on the question of passage.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 233, noes 186, not voting 12, as follows:

[Roll No. 628]

AYES—233

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Altmire
Bachmann
Bachus
Baker
Barrett (SC)
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Bono
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (TX)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carney
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Chandler
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cramer
Crenshaw
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Donnelly
Doolittle
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Ellsworth
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Gordon
Granger
Graves
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Harman
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Hill
Hobson
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Kanjorski
Keller
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Latham
LaTourette
Lewis (CA)
Lewis (KY)
Linder
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Mack
Mahoney (FL)
Manzullo
Marchant
Marshall
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McHenry
McHugh
McIntyre
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Melancon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mitchell
Moore (KS)
Moran (KS)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Myrick
Neugebauer
Nunes
Pearce
Pence
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pickering
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Ramstad
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Ross
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Saxton
Schmidt
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Skelton
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Space
Stearns
Sullivan
Tanner
Taylor
Terry
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Udall (CO)
Upton
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Weller
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wicker
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOES—186

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boucher
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carson
Castor
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Frank (MA)
Gonzalez
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hare
Hastings (FL)
Higgins
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
Kucinich
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (WI)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murtha
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Reyes
Rodriguez
Ros-Lehtinen
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sires
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tauscher
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—12

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Hastert
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Radanovich
Slaughter
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that less than 2 minutes remain in the vote.

□ 2212

Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. WILSON of Ohio, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. HOLDEN, and Mr. MOORE of Kansas changed their vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the motion to recommit was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the instructions of the House on the motion to recommit, I report H.R. 1851 back to the House with an amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment:

Page 107, after line 9, insert the following new section:

SEC. 19. ACCEPTABLE IDENTIFICATION REQUIREMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Rental housing assistance under section 8(o) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 may not be provided on behalf of any individual or household unless the individual provides, or, in the case of a household, all adult members of the household provide, valid personal identification in one of the following forms:

(1) SOCIAL SECURITY CARD WITH PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD OR REAL ID ACT IDENTIFICATION.—

(A) A social security card accompanied by a photo identification card issued by the Federal Government or a State Government; or

(B) A driver's license or identification card issued by a State in the case of a State that is in compliance with title II of the REAL ID Act of 2005 (title II of division B of Public Law 109–13; 49 U.S.C. 30301 note).

(2) PASSPORT.—A passport issued by the United States or a foreign government.

(3) USCIS PHOTO IDENTIFICATION CARD.—A photo identification card issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security (acting through the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services).

(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall, by regulation, require that each public housing agency or other entity administering rental housing assistance described in subsection (a) take such actions as the Secretary considers necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of subsection (a).

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the amendment.

The amendment was agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 333, nays 83, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 629]

YEAS—333

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachmann
Bachus
Baird
Baker
Baldwin
Barrow
Barton (TX)
Bean
Becerra
Berman
Berry
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blumenauer
Bonner
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Butterfield
Camp (MI)
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castle
Castor
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Cooper
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Cramer
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, Lincoln
Davis, Tom
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doyle
Drake
Edwards
Ehlers
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Ferguson
Filner
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Frank (MA)
Frelinghuysen
Gerlach
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gillmor
Gonzalez
Gordon
Granger
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Hayes
Heller
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hobson
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hoyer
Hulshof
Hunter
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Kind
King (NY)
Kirk
Klein (FL)
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Lantos
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lewis (KY)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McDermott
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mitchell
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Myrick
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Nunes
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pickering
Platts
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Pryce (OH)
Rahall
Ramstad
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Reichert
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Saxton
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schmidt
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shays
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Spratt
Stark
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Tierney
Towns
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Weller
Wexler
Whitfield
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (OH)
Wolf
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (FL)

NAYS—83

Akin
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bono
Brady (TX)
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Carter
Chabot
Coble
Conaway
Culberson
Davis, David
Deal (GA)
Doolittle
Dreier
Duncan
Feeney
Flake
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Graves
Hastings (WA)
Hensarling
Herger
Hoekstra
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
King (IA)
Kingston
Kline (MN)
Lamborn
Lewis (CA)
Linder
Mack
Manzullo
McHenry
McKeon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Murphy, Patrick
Musgrave
Neugebauer
Pence
Petri
Pitts
Poe
Price (GA)
Putnam
Rohrabacher
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Schwartz
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Stearns
Sullivan
Thornberry
Walberg
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Westmoreland
Wicker
Wilson (SC)

NOT VOTING—15

Berkley
Conyers
Cubin
Davis, Jo Ann
Hastert
Hooley
Jindal
McCrery
Paul
Radanovich
Sánchez, Linda T.
Shuster
Slaughter
Tancredo
Young (AK)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are advised that there are 2 minutes remaining to vote on passage of the bill.

□ 2221

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZING THE CLERK TO MAKE CORRECTIONS IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 1851, SECTION 8 VOUCHER REFORM ACT OF 2007

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Clerk be authorized to make technical corrections in the engrossment of H.R. 1851, to include corrections in spelling, punctuation, section numbering and cross-referencing, and the insertion of headings.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BLUNT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend from Maryland, the majority leader, for the purpose of inquiring about next week's schedule.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend.

I first would announce, notwithstanding the requests of almost every Member in the House and over their vigorous objection, we're not going to be meeting tomorrow. You know that.

But we will come back on Monday, and the House will meet at 12:30 for morning hour business, 2 p.m. for legislative business, with votes rolled until 6:30 p.m.

On Tuesday, the House will meet at 9 a.m. for morning hour business and 10 a.m. for legislative business. On Wednesday and Thursday, the House will meet at 10 a.m.

In addition to several bills under suspension of the rules, a list of those bills will be, as is the practice, announced by the close of business tomorrow, we expect to complete consideration of the fiscal year 2008 Energy and Water Development appropriations bill and the fiscal year 2008 Labor, HHS and Education appropriations bill. Again, to the great disappointment of the Members, there will be no votes on Friday.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, I sensed the sadness on those Friday opportunities to work in the district, and I'm glad we're working those out for our Members.

On the schedule next week, I'm wondering if we should anticipate any votes next week on Iraq. We voted today on an Iraq withdrawal bill that was introduced just 2 days ago. That bill wasn't noticed on last week's schedule. It didn't go through committee. It didn't have a hearing; didn't go into the Rules Committee until 1:30 on Wednesday, and I'm wondering if we're going to see anything like that on an Iraq bill next week.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend for yielding. And I want to tell the gentleman it's possible that there will be a vote on some facet of our policy in Iraq next week. I don't know when that would be, and I don't want to say that it will be, but it is possible.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for that. Though that possibility is one that I'm surprised wasn't in the potential work for next week, though I hear that it's not in the scheduled work for next week, I'm wondering if we would see an Iraq bill next week or in the following week, will those bills go through committee, or will we just, once again, see those bills created and brought to the floor like the bill this week?

I would yield to my friend on that.

Mr. HOYER. I thank my friend for yielding. There may well be bills that we have already considered in committee and/or portions of bills that were considered in committee broken out of those bills and brought to the floor. That is a practice which, as you know, was not unheard of in previous Congresses, and that is possible.

Mr. BLUNT. Using my time here, I would suggest that in the previous Congress, while we did have some votes on Iraq, we did not have votes that didn't have hearings; we didn't have votes that didn't seek information.

At 10:30 at night, I don't want to belabor this in the debate that we've already had today, but I do think that information on these kinds of issues would be helpful if we could gain that through the normal process.

And while we may have talked about Iraq in the normal process, certainly, many of the questions that this bill generated never had a chance to be asked. And just from my own perspective as a Member of Congress, I would think that there's a better way to approach this critically important issue than that.

Mr. HOYER. Will my friend yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for his observation.

Of course, the bill that was on the floor was, while not exactly alike, very, very close to legislation we have considered at least twice on this floor, one of which we sent to the President. The President vetoed that legislation.

But with all due respect to my friend, I do not believe either the subject matter or the process that was set forth in that bill was unique and had not been contemplated by, frankly, every Member of the House. It was not the same bill. I understand that. But it was very much like it.

And my answer to your previous question was, there may be similar pieces of legislation which have been considered, either by committees or by the House, that may be brought up next week or the week after.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, I don't remember the bills on the House floor exactly the same way that the leader does, on the House floor in the past. I think there was quite a bit of new material there. And maybe, again, I also think, while we're on this topic, that the result of that vote was also very similar to votes we've had on this topic, and wouldn't anticipate that changing in the next weeks. But if that's the way we're going to spend our time, that is the way we're going to spend some of our time.

I have a couple of questions on conferences that I don't have any information on and I believe my friend may. Last time we talked on the floor, which was almost 2 weeks ago now, you thought we would be going to conference on the 9/11 recommendations bill and the lobbying reform bill in the near future, and I see that the Rules Committee is meeting on Monday concerning the 9/11 bill, and I'm wondering if you have any more information about combining that with something else or why there would be a Rules Committee meeting on that.

I would yield to my friend for any information on that process of going to conference.

Mr. HOYER. I think it is likely that we will go to conference on the 9/11 bill next week. They may link that up with another piece of legislation. But it is likely that we will go to conference next week.

Mr. BLUNT. Are there any other conferences anticipated?

Mr. HOYER. We're obviously hopeful that we can move the lobbying and disclosure conference. The Senate has not agreed to go to conference at this point in time. We're hopeful that they will, so that is a possibility. There may be other conferences, but I don't think so for next week. I don't have any specific information on a conference. The WRDA bill is, I think, pretty close to being ready, but I don't have any specific information on that bill.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. Will my friend yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I would.

Mr. HOYER. Thank you. I understand the gentleman's concern about Iraq, but I want to say, first of all, that all of us understand on this floor that there is no issue which has the attention more than Iraq of the American people, number one.

Number two, the American people feel it is a critically important issue. Not only does it have their attention, but they think it's critically important.

And my friend will remember, I think, returning here, I received a call Saturday afternoon that we were going to have a session on Sunday. Many of our Members were overseas. But the issue was perceived as so important by the majority leader that he reconvened us, with the Speaker's participation, as you recall, on the following Sunday afternoon.

□ 2230

We voted on a bill that many felt was a very important bill that hadn't gone through a committee late that Sunday evening.

Many people in this country and on this side of the aisle and I think on your side of the aisle feel that Iraq is a critical issue. So I say with all respect, we do intend to continue to address this issue, and we hope the votes do change. If they don't change, they don't change. There is nothing we can do about that. But we can continue to focus on an issue we think is critically important.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his comments on that. I do recall that extraordinary session and dissatisfaction created with some of our Members and maybe with the country, and the country does look at what we do and how we do it and when we do it. They look at what we do over and over again, and it is up to the country to evaluate the purpose served by that. And if they evaluate it to the detriment of the majority, the majority sometimes pays the price for that.

And our troops in the field, not to debate this bill again, also I think, have some reason to anticipate that there should be a point when they are given direction and given an opportunity to follow up on that direction.

The last question I have is on energy. We have heard reports that the majority would hope to move an energy bill the week of July 23, and I have also heard that that bill could be moved in two parts, one dealing with the part of the bill marked up without the Ways and Means portion and then the Ways and Means portion. And I am wondering, as we anticipate that debate, if the leader could give us a sense of whether what we are hearing about that is the likely way that that energy bill will proceed.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. Clearly that is one option that, as the gentleman indicates he has heard, is being discussed. No decision is being made on that yet. However, it is our intention and hope that we will have the energy bill on the floor from the 11 committees that have been considering energy legislation on the floor prior to the August break. The week of the 23rd is, I think, a target week, but we have not made that decision at this point in time. But we do hope that we will have the energy bill on the floor prior to the August break.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank my friend for that. That is helpful information, and

we will proceed with next week's work next week.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW AND ADJOURNMENT FROM FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2007 TO MONDAY, JULY 16, 2007

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 4 p.m. tomorrow, and further, when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, July 16, 2007, for morning-hour debate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLISON). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE HARRY S TRUMAN SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 2004(b), and the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair announces the Speaker's appointment of the following Members of the House to the Board of Trustees of the Harry S Truman Scholarship Foundation:

Mr. SKELTON, Missouri; and

Mr. HULSHOF, Missouri.

INITIAL BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT REPORT—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 110–45)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Committee on Armed Services and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1314 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28) (the ''Act''), attached is the report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks contained in the Act and declares whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved.

This report has been prepared in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense; Commander, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; the United States Ambassador to Iraq; and the Commander of United States Central Command.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *July 12, 2007*.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WATERS addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

FREE THE ISRAELI SOLDIERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great solemnity to mark the 1-year anniversary of the killing of three Israeli soldiers and the kidnapping of two others, Eldad Regev and Udi Goldwasser. On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel and attacked two IDF armored jeeps as they were patrolling Israel's northern border.

Eldad is 26, born in Kiryat Motzkin. I met Eldad's brother, Benny, in Israel last summer, just weeks after his brother's kidnapping. He begged us to spread the message back to the United States that we must do everything possible to bring the missing soldiers home. Eldad's family and friends pray every day for Eldad's safety and his swift return. They wrote of him:

''One of the qualities that makes Eldad so special is the kindness of his heart, never hesitating to donate and offer aid to anyone in need. He always likes to stay informed and is constantly involved in everything that is happening around him.''

Udi is 31 from Nahariya. I met Udi's mother just a few months ago when she visited Members of Congress on Capitol Hill. She came to raise awareness about the plight of her son and others who were kidnapped. Udi had just married Karnit when he was captured, and his wife had to spend their 1-year anniversary alone, wondering where her husband was and what condition he was in. His family and friends wrote:

''He's a loving, caring person, always ready to offer a helping hand in any situation. He is a man of principles and values, knowledgeable in many varied subjects.''

Unfortunately, Eldad and Udi are not alone among Israel's missing soldiers. Three weeks before their capture, Hamas kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. The Shalit family has also met with many communities across the United States, urging people to remember their son and speak out on his behalf.

I rise tonight to make sure that the plight of these soldiers is not forgotten. I rise to honor the sacrifices of these soldiers and their families who wait every day for news of their circumstances.

Here in my hand I have a copy of their dogtags. The United Jewish Communities around the country delivered a copy of the dogtags to every Member of Congress to help raise awareness that it has been 1 year since the families have heard from their loved ones. It has been 1 whole year since they have seen their husband, son, and brother. These families have heard not one word from the captors about whether they are alive or okay.

I join the families of these soldiers and all freedom-loving Americans in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Eldad, Udi, and Gilad. America stands with Israel in its refusal to let these soldiers be forgotten. Let their dogtags on the floor of the United States House of Representatives serve as a symbol of unwavering vigilance and support. American families and Israeli families are united in the hope that these families should suffer no longer.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, one year ago today, Hezbollah militants executed a brazen cross-border attack on an Israeli patrol that killed three and kidnapped Israeli reservists Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Weeks before, on June 25, Hamas terrorists infiltrated Israel from Gaza, killing two and abducting Corporal Gilad Shalit.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to travel to the region with Speaker NANCY PELOSI. With each Arab leader our delegation pressed the plight of these soldiers. The Speaker personally handed their dog tags to Syrian President Assad and urged him to act on a humanitarian basis to achieve their swift and unconditional return.

Sadly, these three brave soldiers join a longer list of MIAs that includes Zachary Baumel, Yehuda Katz, Zvi Feldman, taken hostage in 1982, and Ron Arad, an Israeli military pilot taken captive in 1986. As long as they are missing, their families, the people of Israel, and supporters of Israel around the world hold a constant vigil praying for their return. I want to recognize the dedicated work of the United Jewish Communities, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, and a multitude of synagogues, camps and schools around the

country for their efforts to make sure these soldiers are not forgotten.

''Leave no soldier behind,'' is the mantra of many armies. In a nation as small as Israel, where military service is mandatory, the commitment to rescue POWs and MIAs is a national imperative. It is our responsibility as a fellow democracy and steadfast ally to do all we can to help win their freedom.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call the House's attention to a very sad anniversary. One year ago today, Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel to attack Israeli troops patrolling the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon. They killed three Israeli soldiers, wounded two others and kidnaped Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Only a few days earlier, on June 25, 2006, Hamas terrorists likewise crossed into Israel and attacked an IDF position, killing two soldiers, wounding a third and kidnapping Gildad Shalit.

Both of these vicious terrorist organizations, which constantly proclaim their adherence to religion and morality, have denied these three Israeli soldiers contact with the Red Cross or Red Crescent, or direct contact with their families. Despite the recent release of an audio tape, it is not in fact known if these three men are currently alive, if they are injured or if they are well. Not content merely to hold these men as hostages, Hamas and Hezbollah insist on torturing their families with the agony of not knowing about the true condition of their loved ones.

This is true measure of the faith and morality of these terrorists. In the name of religion they inflict agony. In the name of the sacred they perpetrate barbarism. In the name of their faith they degrade other human beings.

Thus they show the true content of their beliefs. Thus they show the world what their vainglorious proclamations amount to: cynical cruelty and cold calculation.

These terrorist groups have sought to transform Gilad, Ehud and Eldad into something they are not: bargaining chips or pawns, a kind of political chattel. Things that can be swapped for favors or sacrificed on a whim. These three men are not things. They are human beings. They have names and they have families. They have rights as captured soldiers and they have rights as human beings.

The House has expressed itself clearly on this matter on March 13th, when it passed H. Res. 107, the bipartisan resolution I introduced demanding the release of these three captives and condemning both the terrorists and their Syrian and Iranian sponsors for their criminal and indecent behavior.

We can not compel Hamas and Hezbollah to release Gilad, Ehud and Eldad any more than we can force them to understand the difference between right and wrong. You can not disgrace someone incapable of shame. But we can stand by our ally, the State of Israel. We can express our sympathy and our concern for the captives and for their families.

We can let the perpetrators of this barbarism know that we have not forgotten what they have done, and what they are continuing to do. We can bear witness. And we can add our voices to all those saying ''Enough. Enough. Let these men go home.''

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I call for the unconditional release of Israeli soldiers still held hostage by terrorists. Exactly one year ago today, Hezbollah terrorists entered territory that unambiguously belongs to Israel under international law, launching an assault into Israel's north that killed three soldiers on patrol, wounded two, and took two others hostage.

The two hostages, Ehud ''Udi'' Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, were injured in the attack, and yet Hezbollah refuses to allow representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit them, a flagrant breach of international law and practice. They have also refused to give the hostages' families any indication that their loved ones are alive. This is particularly worrisome, because reports have surfaced suggesting Goldwasser and Regev could have been critically injured in the attack in which they were taken captive.

Only seventeen days earlier, fundamentalist thugs launched a similar raid out of the Gaza Strip to take hostage another young Israeli soldier on patrol in Israel's south, Corporal Gilad Shalit. He has now been held hostage in Gaza for more than a year. Just two weeks ago a recording of him pleading for help was released on a Hamas website. In this recording, Shalit says that his health is deteriorating and he is in pressing need of long-term hospitalization. It should come as no surprise that his terrorist captors have failed to allow him adequate medical treatment.

Mr. Speaker, Hezbollah and Hamas are clearly to blame for the outbreak of violence in the Middle East last summer. They committed acts of war by kidnapping Israeli soldiers who were conducting regular patrol missions on their own side of the border.

And while last summer's war has receded somewhat into the past, the initial causes for the violence have not yet been addressed. Chief among these is the fact that these three Israeli hostages remain in captivity and that Hezbollah and Hamas remain committed to Israel's violent destruction. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, which imposed a ceasefire on Israel's Lebanon front, emphasized, and I quote, ''the need to address the causes that have given rise to the current crisis, including the unconditional release of the abducted Israeli soldiers.'' Unfortunately, that condition remains totally unfulfilled.

Mr. Speaker, this House has not been silent on the plight of these victims of terrorism. Shortly after Udi Goldwasser's young wife visited Congress at the start of this year and pleaded for our help, we swiftly passed H. Res. 107, which was sponsored by my good friend Congressman GARY ACKERMAN, the distinguished chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. This bill called for the unconditional release of the three kidnapped soldiers and condemned the culpable terrorist groups for their despicable actions. The Senate passed a similar bill, which was introduced by Senator HILLARY CLINTON.

Speaker PELOSI has played a particularly admirable role in the global effort to free these three men. When she met with Syrian President Assad in Damascus just this past April, she presented him with a replica of the three hostages' ''dog tags'' as a means of urging him to secure their release from these terrorist groups that Damascus has long hosted and supported. She also made crystal-clear to President Assad that under no circumstances could bilateral relations with the United States improve until Damascus showed its willingness to cease sponsoring terror.

To commemorate the one year anniversary of the kidnapping of Goldwasser and Regev by Hezbollah, the United Jewish Communities recently organized a campaign to send copies of these dog tags to every member of Congress. I commend them for their admirable and thoughtful activism drawing attention to the ongoing plight of the three captives.

Mr. Speaker, Israel is a steadfast ally of the United States, and it is on the frontline of the war against terrorism. Israeli soldiers face such threats every day, much like our own inspiring and steadfast soldiers who are currently serving in harm's way in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. It is incumbent upon us to give our ally in this fight our steadfast support in the face of such terrorist predations.

Mr. Speaker, many of us have been active in efforts over the years to convince our friends in the EU to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group. A very few EU states do so on a national basis, but the EU collectively continues to view Hezbollah strictly as a political party. This is an absurd anomaly, and I urge our EU friends and allies to reconsider this policy on this sad one-year anniversary. I know of no other ''political party'' in the world that kidnaps and holds hostages—a fairly remarkable innovation in democratic politics. (In contrast to its policy regarding Hezbollah, the EU does designate Hamas as a terrorist group. I am pleased by that, but the distinction between Hamas killers and Hezbollah killers is frankly lost on me.)

Mr. Speaker, I have the following message for the terrorists who are holding the three Israeli soldiers: Release these innocent hostages, and do so without delay. Should you not, the civilized world—and certainly this body—will not remain silent.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DR. BERNARD SIEGAN: RECLAIMING A REPUTATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to correct the record concerning a great economist and friend, the late Dr. Bernard Siegan, a distinguished professor of law at the University of San Diego. In 1988 Dr. Siegan was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to the U.S. Court of Appeals. He promptly came under personal attack, most notably from Professor Lawrence Tribe of Harvard University.

Tribe wrote a public letter on May 28, 1987, to Senator Joseph Biden belittling Dr. Siegan as being outside the mainstream of American jurisprudence. Tribe further asserted that Dr. Siegan ''reveals himself to be not a judicial conservative but an ideologue of the right, one who would deploy the Constitution in service of a conservative economic philosophy.''

In a widely quoted section of his letter, Professor Tribe assailed Dr. Siegan's support of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling as ''a component of the right to travel, a right long secured by the Federal courts,'' which was, of course, Dr. Siegan's reason for supporting Brown v. Board of Education.

At the time Professor Tribe claimed that this legal view was ''tortured'' and part of ''Mr. Siegan's radical revisionism.'' At the conclusion of the letter, Professor Tribe wrote, ''The notion that it is a black child's freedom to 'travel' onto the school grounds that segregation laws infringed is so bizarre and strained . . . as to bring into question both Mr. Siegan's competence as a constitutional lawyer and his sincerity as a scholar.'' This type of assault was typical of the attacks which preceded the defeat of Dr. Siegan's nomination. That was back in 1987. And much has changed since then.

By the time that Dr. Siegan died in March of 2006, he had many books and speeches and articles that made him one of the most prolific and respected legal and constitutional scholars on the political right. He is today credited with being a father of the recurrent rejuvenation of property rights theory in law.

In response to Dr. Siegan's defense of his views regarding Brown v. Board of Education, Tribe replied in a letter to Dr. Siegan's wife, and this was September 6, 1991: ''I have reconsidered my description of your analysis of Brown v. Board of Education in footnote 10 on page 1379 of the second edition of American Constitutional Law. I agree with your general approach that Brown can be justified by arguing from the 'liberty' component of the 14th amendment . . . ''

Now, that was a letter sent to Siegan years later by Dr. Tribe and when Dr. Tribe and Dr. Siegan were corresponding. These letters were found by his wife, Shelley. Tribe in that same letter writes: ''Although I do not reach the same conclusions you do, the issues you raise are important enough to be worthy of scholarly discussion. I am now in the process of drafting a rather substantial supplement to my treatise summarizing recent developments in constitutional law. In my discussion of the equal protection clause, I will include a citation to your book that I am sure will please you more than the citation did in the last book.''

□ 2245

Unfortunately for the public reputation of Dr. Siegan, Professor Tribe never did complete the supplement to his treatise, and Dr. Siegan, of course, passed away after that exchange of letters.

Mrs. Siegan wrote to Professor Tribe after discovering these letters and asked Dr. Tribe for information on the planned, but not completed, supplement. She also asked the following question: ''In the 19 years since you penned your letter to JOE BIDEN, I wonder if you have reconsidered your comment regarding Bernie's competence as a constitutional lawyer and a serious scholar?'' Tribe replied to Mrs. Siegan on September 21, 2006. ''Please permit me,'' he wrote, ''to apologize to you here for the unnecessarily ad hominem character of what I wrote to Senator BIDEN in May of 1987. To help correct the record, if only posthumously, I am sending a copy of this letter to Senator BIDEN. Despite the differences in our perspectives,'' he said, ''I came to think of Bernie, just as you write that he thought of me, as a colleague in the profession we both truly love and consider to be one of the noblest.''

I would submit the rest of this statement for the RECORD and note that Lawrence Tribe has set the Record straight, and now the Record is straight on the great person and great scholar that Dr. Bernard Siegan was.

I am sorry to have caused him, or you, any distress, and am grateful for the opportunity your letter afforded me to set the record straight as best I could at this late date.

Mr. Speaker, the correspondence between Professors Bernard Siegan and Lawrence Tribe and the subsequent correspondence between Shelly Siegan and Professor Tribe tell us much about the ugly period of personal attack this country experienced during the judicial nomination hearings of the 1980s.

A review of the above cited letters makes it clear that Professor Bernard Siegan was a distinguished and respected scholar and champion of personal liberty and private property. Contrary to assertions made during his nomination hearings in 1987, Professor Bernard Siegan would have made an excellent addition to the Ninth District Circuit Court of Appeals. And now the record is set straight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. DELAURO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

U.S. TRADE POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the United States has just announced the second highest monthly trade deficit for this year, $60 billion. That is just in the month of May. Our Nation continues to import more goods and services than we export at alarming rates, with a record $192 billion more coming into this country in the earlier part of this year than going out.

This particular chart shows the top category of concern, imported petroleum, which has continued to rise, including in this Presidential administration, despite President Bush's statement at the beginning of his administration that we have a serious problem. America is addicted to oil, which is being imported from some of the most unstable parts of the world. He said that, and yet he continued to allow the import of more petroleum.

Americans are watching as our government does nothing to curb these growing trade deficits, with their accompanying job losses, deteriorating labor conditions and community washouts that U.S. trade policy leaves in its wake.

A bill I have sponsored, H.R. 169, the Balancing Trade Act of 2007, requires the President, if over 3 consecutive calendar years the United States has a trade deficit with another country that totals over $10 billion, to take the necessary steps to create a trading relationship that would eliminate or substantially reduce that trade deficit by entering into better agreements with that country. In other words, if the United States runs a substantial deficit with any one country, the President must report back to Congress on his plans for correcting that imbalance. This is a very constructive first step to correct the path of U.S. trade policy which is yielding this red ink.

Our bill calls attention to those countries who are taking advantage of our willingness to import goods from them while they block our access to their markets. Our two largest deficits in 2006, for example, were first with China. This is a country we have amassed a $232.5 billion deficit. That is an enormous amount, comprising about a quarter of what we have amassed with all countries in the world. And the deficit with China has just grown at alarming proportions.

The next largest deficit is with Japan. That has been a lingering deficit that has been growing over the years. It now totals about one-third of what we accumulate with China; it's about $88.4 billion. And every billion in deficit equals a loss of between 10,000 and 20,000 jobs in this country. That is a displacement in production in this country, putting it someplace else.

Now, these deficits have persisted for years, which makes them particularly troublesome. This chart illustrates our deficit with China pre and post what is called ''normal trade relations'' with China. We had a very bad deficit already back in the late 1990s, but with the adoption of permanent trade relations with China, that deficit has more than doubled.

If we had taken steps to correct this deficit at the beginning of the downward turn rather than turning our backs on it and allowing more red ink with China, our country would be stronger today. It would not have the kind of annual budget deficits that we're having. And we would be more economically secure here at home and, frankly, politically secure in the world. Instead, we continue to sacrifice our jobs to the lowest bidders in closed markets that do not follow rules of free trade. Free trade can be productive and it can be profitable, but only if it is free trade among free people.

Trading with closed economies that manipulate currency, that choose not to enforce what scant labor standards they might have, and otherwise levy very restrictive non-tariff barriers against our products harm our economy. America, wake up. We can no longer ignore the games that our competition is playing with us. We must trade for America; not for secret, non-transparent governments to prosper off our unwillingness to hold them to democratic standards or, at the very least, the rules of truly free trade among free people.

I urge my colleagues to join me in requiring the President to address this issue by cosponsoring our bill, H.R. 169. We must take action to reduce the trade deficit and restore our economic independence, competitiveness and begin creating jobs across our country again.

DEMOCRATS' BROKEN PROMISES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I would like to say to my colleagues who may be in their offices that were going to join me in a special order tonight that we're not going to be able to do it because of the late hour. So I'm going to take a 5-minute special order to talk about some of the issues we were going to discuss.

Today, we discussed at length the war in Iraq. And that's probably the most important issue facing America today, and I'm glad we had that very thorough debate.

But one of the things that's very, very important that we're not focusing enough attention on is transparency in government and the amount of money that we're spending and the taxes that are going to be raised.

When this new Speaker and the majority came into power, they said this was going to be the most transparent House in the history of the country, in all respects. And just 2 weeks ago, the majority wanted to start talking about a Slush fund rather than debating each one of the earmarks that should have been debated on this floor. And they were going to take that Slush fund money and go to the conference committee and behind closed doors decide how that money was going to be spent. The American people don't want that. The American people want to hear these issues debated, the amount of money being debated for special projects, so they know where their tax dollars are going and what the purpose is.

Not all earmarks are bad. Some of them are very, very good and very necessary, but they ought to be debated one by one on this floor so the American people know where their money is going.

I would like to also say that the budget that was passed by the opposition is going to necessitate at least a $217 billion tax increase, and in all probability it will be more like $392 billion, which would be the largest tax increase in the history of this country. And that, at a time when we need to address some of the more pressing issues, like how we deal with the Social Security trust fund.

The Social Security trust fund will go into deficit in 10 years. And at that point, we're going to see the American people starting to look at Social Security as a program that's going to be in the past, no longer something that we can rely on in the future.

The young people in this country are going to have a terrible time planning for their retirement because there won't be any money in the Social Security trust fund in the future for these young people unless we start addressing the problem right now, and we're not doing it.

As I said, the projected tax collections for Social Security and the spending for Social Security are going to be exceeded in 10 years. And after that, adjusting for inflation, the annual deficits for Social Security will reach $68 billion in the year 2020, $267 billion in 2030, and $331 billion in 2035. Many of us won't be around to see that, but our kids and our grandkids will, and they will be saying, why didn't we address the issue of the deficits and Social Security when we had a chance?

We can do that still today, but we're not focusing attention on that. And the people who are relying on Social Security and the Social Security trust fund ought to know that we're not addressing the problem. And the solvency of that fund, not for us, but for the future generations, is not going to be there, which means that we will have to either raise taxes or cut benefits. This is going to happen unless we address that issue.

So I would just like to say to my colleagues tonight, we are concentrating on the major issues, the war in Iraq, and a lot of other issues that are very important, but we must not neglect the budget. We must not neglect transparency and bringing these issues to the floor for debate, and we must not neglect addressing the issue of Social Security reform, because if we don't do it, our kids and our grandkids aren't going to have a retirement program to rely on.

SPENDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In order for the government to be held accountable to the taxpayers that fund it, the American people deserve truth in budgeting and have a right to know how federal dollars are spent.

Two weeks ago, House conservatives—on behalf of taxpayers—led the charge to demand transparency in the Federal spending process.

In stark contrast to the views they espoused during the 2006 campaign cycle Appropriations Committee Chairman OBEY and the Democrat leadership proposed to leave lump sums of money without a specified purpose in the appropriations bills considered by the House, and later authorizing those funds for earmarks in closed door Conference Committee. In other words, the very people who promised America: "We will bring transparency and openness to the budget process and to the use of earmarks, and we will give the American people the leadership they deserve." (PELOSI Press Release 12/11/2006)

Instead they proposed to create a secret slush fund for earmarks—to be funded by the largest tax increase in American history. Make no mistake about it; the budget passed by House Democrats includes what will likely become the largest tax increase in history. Though they try to claim otherwise, the truth is in black and white in the language of their own bill; and the truth is that it will raise taxes by at least $217 billion and in all likelihood $392 billion.

Conservatives were successful in stopping the slush fund and bringing transparency to earmarks; bringing them into the light of day where they can be debated and voted on by Members of this House.

Not all earmarks are bad things, but not all earmarks are a Federal priority. But we should respect the American people enough to stand up and debate this issue. The simple argument that, "it's a good project" should never be enough to justify spending taxpayer dollars on it in lieu of a more pressing national priority, or returning the money to American families.

Achieving transparency is only half the battle, as conservatives we now need to push accountability; because without enforcing accountability, transparency doesn't mean much. Accountability in Federal spending can be achieved through an open and honest debate about America's priorities.

Tonight, I want to talk about a priority—a crisis that my Democrat colleagues are ignoring in their rush to raise your taxes and spend more money on entitlement programs; namely the impending bankruptcy of Social Security.

SOCIAL SECURITY SURPLUS SPENDING

A safe, secure, and stable retirement is part of the American dream. Yet time and again, Washington has proven itself incapable of managing Americans' hard earned Social Security dollars. There is no longer a debate about whether Social Security faces a problem or whether it needs to fixed.

There is something fundamentally wrong when more young Americans believe in the existence of UFOs than believe that their Social Security benefits will be there for them when they retire. Why do young Americans feel this way? Because they can see the obvious—that Washington has been spending taxpayer dollars that have already been promised to help make their retirement more sustainable.

Taxpayers have the right to receive back each and every dollar—and more—that they entrust to the government for their retirement. Social Security money collected from Americans for Social Security should not be used for anything other than Social Security. Ensuring a stable retirement is not a Republican or Democrat obligation, it is an American obligation.

Despite passing the largest tax increase in American history, the Democrat majority failed to stop raiding the Social Security surplus. In fact, they fail to address entitlements at all. In contrast budget offered by Congressman PAUL RYAN protected the surplus.

Since 1984, the Federal Government has collected more money in Social Security taxes than it pays out in benefits. Instead of using this money to shore up the program's solvency, the government squandered these tax payer dollars on other programs, and earmarks.

Each year that Congress fails to protect the Social Security cash flow surplus, and squanders its money on other programs, it jeopardizes the stability of this vital government program and hastens its date of insolvency.

By controlling and prioritizing government spending, the FY 2008 Republican budget creates surplus of $99 billion in 2012, stopping the raid on Social Security in 2012—and did it without raising taxes. This gives the taxpayers the accountability that they deserve.

Social Security owes $6.8 trillion more in benefits than it will receive in taxes. That number includes $2.0 trillion, in net present value terms, to repay the bonds in Social Security's trust fund.

Today's Social Security is not sustainable and will implode. Social Security spending will exceed projected tax collections in 2017. These deficits will quickly balloon to alarming proportions. After adjusting for inflation, annual deficits will reach $67.8 billion in 2020, $266.5 billion in 2030, and $330.9 billion in 2035.

The year when Social Security begins to spend more than it takes in, 2017, is extremely important. From that point on, Social Security will require large and growing amounts of general revenue money in order to pay all of its promised benefits. Even though this money will technically come from cashing in the special issue bonds in the trust fund, the money to repay them will come from other tax collections or borrowing. The billions that go to Social Security each year will make it harder to find money for other government programs or require large and growing tax increases.

A second important year is 2009. Starting in just 2 years, the annual Social Security surpluses that Congress has been borrowing and spending on other programs will begin to shrink. From that point on, Congress will have to find other sources to replace the money that it borrows from Social Security or shrink spending. By 2017, Congress will have about $100 billion less to spend annually.

Compared to these two dates, 2041—the year that the Social Security trust fund runs out of its special issue bonds—has little importance. Even though the end of those bonds will require a 25 percent benefit reduction, Congress would have been paying over $300 billion a year, in 2007 dollars, to repay those bonds for about 7 years by the time the trust fund runs out. Congress will have to do this through some combination of other spending cuts, new taxes, or additional borrowing. These are the same choices Congress would face without the trust fund.

Bad news for younger workers. Unfortunately, younger workers have a great deal to worry about. Even though their parents' and grandparents' benefits are safe, theirs are not. Any worker born after 1974 will reach full retirement age after the trust fund is exhausted. Unless Congress acts, younger workers can look forward to paying full Social Security taxes throughout their careers but only receiving 75 percent or less of the benefits that have been promised to them. In addition, they will have to repay the Social Security trust fund, an expense that will total almost $6 trillion by the time the trust fund is exhausted in 2041.

Democrat's delay is deadly for Social Security. Each year, there is one less year of surplus and one more year of deficit. Once those deficits begin in 2017, the Trustees Report shows that they will never end. Each year, with the disappearance of another year of surplus, reforming Social Security gets more expensive.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TOWNS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCAUL of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING RISING CITY VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, on the Fourth of July, during a celebration to mark the opening of a new volunteer fire station in Rising City, Nebraska, I was introduced to two extraordinary volunteer firefighters, Mr. Rich Topil and Mr. Don Fish.

Rising City, like so many rural communities in Nebraska, relies on the good efforts of volunteer firefighters to meet their needs for fire protection as well as life-saving services. These volunteers act out of a sense of dedication and duty to the communities that they serve.

On Independence Day, the citizens of Rising City recognized Mr. Topil and Mr. Fish for having served as volunteer firefighters for an unbelievable total of 117 combined years. It was only fitting that these two men were honored by the people to whom they have given so much.

Mr. Speaker, Independence Day is when we traditionally celebrate the best of America; family, community and country. And Mr. Topil and Mr. Fish and the citizens of Rising City, Nebraska, remind us all that these values remain very strong and very vibrant.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NEW ORLEANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Mr. Speaker, since Hurricane Katrina, the great New Orleans area has been in disarray. While there have been innumerable promises to ensure the region's recovery, a comprehensive response here in Washington to the tragedy back home has not been forthcoming. The citizens of my great city are appreciative of the efforts that have been made. However, much more needs to be done at a vastly more urgent pace.

It has now been 23 months since Hurricane Katrina hit and the faulty levees built by the Army Corps of Engineers collapsed and flooded our homes and businesses. The levees have still not been built back to acceptable standards.

It has been 23 months since nearly half of our residents have had no place in which to return. It has been 23 months, and investors cannot properly use tax credits to bring back rental properties.

It has been 23 months, and most small businesses are still at a standstill, still not back in place.

It has been 23 months, and less than half of our doctors, health care providers and hospitals are back home. Katrina evacuees and survivors have been studied, reported upon and promised to. They now want and deserve real solutions. One way where we could make a significant impact on the growth, repair and the redevelopment of our region is through some tax reforms in areas related to our recovery.

Even before Katrina, the greater New Orleans area was considered one of a high health care service shortage.

Since Katrina, the program is exacerbated. Of the 669,000 residents of the greater New Orleans area, 125,000 have no form of health insurance. The area lacks an adequate availability of health care providers to deal with delivery of health services. Furthermore, post-Katrina, the area lost 89 percent of its psychiatrists and mental health providers. Amando Lo of the Physicians Resource Group states that, ''The city's medical center is hanging on by a thread.''

□ 2300

One possible start towards a remedy of this problem has been offered by the greater New Orleans Health Service Corps. The mission of this program is to sustain and increase access to health care services in the greater New Orleans area by reducing the shortage of critical health care professionals through targeted recruitment and retention strategies. ''The program offers a variety of incentives,'' says Gayla Strahan, the program's coordinator.

One specifically is school loan repayment. However, whereas similar programs under the Public Health Service Act are tax exempt, these are not. Changing this oversight has the potential to greatly effect the decision to come to the region. Drs. Mordaci Potash and Micheala King, recipients of the grant program in the New Orleans area, both say that receiving the grants have been incredibly helpful. However, the taxes to be paid on these grants are a huge burden. Indeed, the taxes they say that are required to be paid are so burdensome they totally undermine the incentive value of the grants altogether, and to such an extent that they are thinking of actually turning down the award and practicing elsewhere. Therefore, one way we can ameliorate the health care problems in our city and the retention and recovery of our health care professionals is to make these grants nontaxable.

Housing is still a dire need in the New Orleans area. There is still an overall shortage of housing since Katrina. Furthermore, most housing that is available is unaffordable to the working class families and the working poor. Greg Rigamer, CEO of GCR & Associates, a group that studies demographics in the area and the economic conditions relating to it, stated that rents have risen 40 percent and the average home selling price has jumped 25 percent.

Earlier this year, Milton Bailey, president of the Louisiana Housing Finance Authority, spoke before the Ways and Means Committee primarily about extending the placed in service date for low-income housing tax credit projects. However, there is so much more that could and needs to be done in this area. Bailey warns if the wording in the tax code relating to credit carryover in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 does not get corrected, the phrasing will stymie the deployment of Go Zone per capita tax credits.

A solution to that would be to rewrite or delete that section, section 1400(c)(1)(c) in the Internal Revenue Code. A failure to do this will jeopardize the entire tax credit program, and the entire credit ceiling in any year reduces the credit ceiling, which would greatly hurt the region.

Finally, the current Louisiana Road Home program gives a financial incentive for residents to return to New Orleans. The grants received are to be used to buy or repair homes lost in the storm. However, there is even doubt as to whether these grants are taxable.

Earlier this year, I introduced H.R. 1445, the Tax Free Road Home Act of 2007. This would amend the Internal Revenue Code to exclude from gross income payments to individual taxpayers from the Louisiana Road Home Program for rebuilding or renewing a personal residence. As with the Health Service Corps, we need to have these grants to be tax exempt. Our people have already been through enough, primarily because of the negligence of the Federal Government in designing and constructing our levee system. Requiring them now to pay taxes on recovery moneys is an additional burden they should not have to bear. It is time to get our tax policies right for the Gulf region if we truly want our people to return, our area to recover, and the promises we made to be met.

TIME TO END THE MISTAKEN WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HALL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Speaker, a recent CRS report shows that the United States is now spending $10 billion a month fighting the war in Iraq. That is over $2.5 billion a week. And what does the American taxpayer get for this $10 billion a month? An army, nearly broken by repeated deployments; a National Guard that is unwilling and unable to respond to natural disasters or terrorist attacks at home because many of our men and women are in Iraq and most of their equipment is; an escalation in Iraq that has resulted in more death and little reduction in violence; an Iraqi government that is unable to govern; Iraqi Security Forces that refuse to fully stand up.

The war in Iraq costs every man, woman and child in New York's Nineteenth District $3,077. For over $3,000 a person, the people of my district have gotten a war that was a strategic mistake and has made them less safe.

Today, the House of Representatives considered another bill for a responsible withdrawal from the war in Iraq. The Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act requires U.S. troops to redeploy from Iraq by April 1, 2008. After 4 years of repeated failure and little accountability, the new Congress is working to repair the damage done to our military and change the direction of this country.

When the President came to Congress to ask for additional funding for the war in Iraq, I established a guiding principle for determining my vote. Any legislation I voted for would have to contain a responsible specific timeline to redeploy U.S. troops out of Iraq. Furthermore, the bill would have to contain benchmarks that would hold the Iraqi government accountable.

Following this principle, I voted four times in 5 months to provide nearly $100 billion for extra military spending in Iraq and Afghanistan, including extra money to improve our fight against al Qaeda in Afghanistan. These bills also required the Iraqi parliament to meet specific benchmarks to reduce violence and limit sectarian violence. Further, they required the President to follow troop readiness standards established by our own Pentagon. Unfortunately, the President ignored the will of the American people and vetoed the first bill that Congress sent him.

The President blindly insists that America continue down the same path in Iraq. The President's path has left our troops in the middle of Iraq's civil war, weakened U.S. national security, and is devastating our military's ability to fight.

The President refuses to listen to his own State Department's report showing that the Taliban is reemerging as a dominant force in Afghanistan, dramatized by the most recent disheartening sight of young girls being machine-gunned as they left their school, a tactic that is used to try to intimidate parents into not sending their girls to school.

Our men and women in uniform in both Iraq and Afghanistan have performed bravely and worked to achieve every mission their leadership has given them. Our troops have performed heroically in Iraq. But the administration concedes that violence remains high; that the Iraqi government has failed to meet the benchmarks endorsed by the President in January; that political reconciliation is nonexistent.

Finally, after years of silence, even President Bush's allies have realized that the current path in Iraq cannot be sustained. Senator DOMENICI says, ''There is no reason to wait. I am trying to tell the President that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening.'' And Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER said, ''The President needs a new strategy.''

It is time our troops had leadership worthy of their service, leadership that will give them achievable missions that improve the security of the American people.

That is why I supported the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act that requires that the President publicly justify the number of troops he needs to carry out post-redeployment missions such as protecting embassy staff, force protection, and fighting international terrorist organizations in Iraq. It is time the American people saw a change in our course.

In the time it has taken me to give this speech, we have spent another roughly $1 million in Iraq. $1 million for every 5 minutes we spend in Iraq, for a war that has made us less safe and has weakened our military.

It is time to change our course in Iraq and refocus on the threats in Afghanistan, where the 9/11 attacks were planned and the al Qaeda and the Taliban continue to plot. It is time we end our mistaken war in Iraq.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DISCUSSING THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. SUTTON) is recognized for half the time until midnight as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, as the hour grows late here this evening, I and some of my fellow freshmen colleagues have gathered here on the floor to talk about the issue that is overarching everything we do in this country today, the war in Iraq.

When we were elected in November, many of us came here on a mandate for change, a mandate for a change of direction in the way the country was heading and a mandate for change in direction in Iraq. So, tonight we are here to talk about the important events of this day, the action that this House took to pass a very important bill, the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act, and also to talk about the report that was recently released from the White House on Iraq and the benchmarks that, sadly, are not being met.

With that, I would like to actually turn this discussion over to some of my fellow colleagues. We will begin with a statement and some commentary from the gentleman from New Hampshire, the distinguished gentleman from New Hampshire, Mr. PAUL HODES.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

I am happy to be here tonight with my colleagues to speak about the issue that predominates in the minds of the people of this country, certainly in the minds of my constituents.

We are in a disastrous and unnecessary war in Iraq. I have received literally thousands of letters, phone calls and e-mails from the constituents of the Second District of New Hampshire, the people I represent, the people who sent me to Congress, telling me one thing loud and clear: They want us out of this miserable war. They want our troops out of the impossible trap of being caught in multiple sectarian conflicts.

I have only been in office for 6 months, yet I have received thousands and thousands of communications from the people I represent. It is past time to change course.

Now, when we do change course, and it is inevitable that we will change course, we must do it responsibly and with a view towards ensuring that our core values and our vital national security interests are protected. We are not talking about precipitous withdrawals. Today, when we passed the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act, we made sure that we set a stage for a responsible course for redeployment of our troops, not a precipitous withdrawal.

Day after day, poll after poll, letter after letter, plea after plea, the American people, and certainly the people of New Hampshire, are demanding we bring this war to a responsible end. As we sit here today, we unfortunately are witness to a stunning lack of leadership, a failure of leadership, a failure to face the reality from the Bush administration.

The President's sad and sorry statement today was counterpoint to the mistakes that have been made in the past. In the absence of leadership from the White House, Congress has the duty to pick up the ball. We have the duty to exercise the moral leadership, the courage and the boldness that the American people know will be necessary to forge a responsible and comprehensive strategy to protect our security interests and lead this country back to a place where our military is strong, where our troops are fighting the right fight against al Qaeda, and where the American people's trust is restored in their leadership.

So I am glad to be here tonight, and I yield back to you, Ms. SUTTON.

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman for his eloquent words about this very, very tragic subject.

At this point I yield to the gentlewoman from New Hampshire for her comments.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Mr. Speaker, it has been 4 years and we are now in our fifth year of war, and once again the Nation stops to assess where are we? And probably the best indicator of where we are was the front page of the Washington Post today.

□ 2315

The first article, ''CIA Said Instability Seemed Irreversible.'' That is the instability in Iraq.

Second article, ''White House Gives Iraq Mixed Marks in Report.'' Unfortunately, Iraq did not meet any of the benchmarks set by the Bush administration and the Congress.

Third article, ''U.S. Warns of Stronger al Qaeda.'' What we are talking about there is the resurgence of al Qaeda in Pakistan and in Afghanistan where it is no longer safe for girls to go to school once again, and where the drug crop is stronger than ever and where we have made no gains at all. Why haven't we made any gains after 4 years? Because we have been dragged into Iraq, into a war without end, by a President who did not understand the region, who is indifferent to the problems, the cultural differences and the problems they are experiencing, and who has not listened to the world. He has not listened to America, and has not listened to his generals and advisors on this.

Now they are asking us for more time. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, there is nothing that upsets me more than hearing somebody stand and ask for more time after 4 long years; more time for the surge, I heard today, that the surge hasn't had time to work. My question to the gentleman was: Which surge are we talking about? I lose track because we have had so many surges. Which surge are we talking about?

Then they say that the President needs more time. Then I hear General Petraeus needs more time. Always we need more time.

How about this. We have a democracy, a young democracy, the President says, in Iraq, and more than half of the people in that parliament signed a petition asking the United States to leave. Now we said we would leave if another nation like Iraq asked us to leave. And yet we hear absolute silence from the President. He will not leave despite of the fact that the government he had elected there has asked us to leave.

It costs us $10 billion a month. When I speak to my constituents, they are all asking, why don't we have money have money for this? We need money for health care. We have a problem with infrastructure. And we just don't have the money for this; this program is being cut back. And my answer over and over is what everybody else is having to tell the good people in this country who need our resources, this is what we have to tell them, you can't have two wars, tax cuts for the top 1 percent, the greatest deficits in history, and still provide for the American people.

We have a decision to make. We have an opportunity finally to provide a responsible road map out of Iraq; and yet we have a President and an administration that is indifferent to this road map.

It is now our responsibility to respond to the American people, to respond to the world and try once again to get the President's attention and once again to ask to please end the craziness here after the thousands of deaths of American soldiers, the injuries which we will be paying for, and should pay for. It is our obligation to honor our commitments to our soldiers, but we will be paying for this for so many years. And we also have an obligation to the Iraqis. We don't even know how many have died because we don't really count them.

What we do know about Iraq is that that culture has been decimated, that those who can leave have left. The countries surrounding Iraq have a large number of refugees, and people living inside Iraq are afraid to go out on their streets.

When I was in Iraq in March, I had an opportunity to speak to Sunni and Shiite women. It was very clear to me that they were unable to resolve their differences. They were so full of mistrust and hatred for each other that they were in the midst of a civil war. Yet we stay there and we continue to put our soldiers in the middle of a civil war, and we continue to be deaf to the cries of the rest of the world.

So we are standing here tonight asking once again for the President to listen to the American people, to listen to reason, to listen to the military leaders who never talk about a military victory any more. They simply talk about stabilizing Iraq, and the question has to be stabilizing Iraq; wasn't Iraq stable 4 years ago? Is this the result we get after 4 years of war?

I thank our soldiers for their incredible commitment to this country. I have had an opportunity to see some of them leave. I have nothing but the deepest respect for them. I know that the Army is suffering under the strain of a 4-year war. The soldiers and their families are suffering under the strain. I know that they have asked us to speak up for them because they are unable to.

So we stand here once again tonight for the people, for the soldiers, and ask the President to please start a responsible road map out of Iraq.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentlewoman for her comments. Your points are well taken. After 4½ years of this tragic war, more than 3,600 brave American troops killed, more than 26,000 injured, and nearly half a trillion dollars spent, we continue down the path that the President insists on taking us.

In his defiance, he has indicated he will continue to ignore reality, as well as the facts contained in the administration's own analysis of the war that was released today.

As you point out, in January, the President sent thousands of additional troops to Iraq and promised to hold the Iraqi government accountable for meeting those benchmarks for success. Today that report makes it clear that we need a change in course.

Unity in Iraq, we know here on this floor, must be determined by the people of Iraq, and our brave troops are caught in the crossfire of a sectarian civil war without a military mission, and the President has no plan to bring them home.

Instead of rejecting calls for change and demeaning those who seek it, the President should listen to the military experts, to Congress and the American people who in their will and wisdom want to responsibly redeploy the troops home.

With that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ARCURI).

Mr. ARCURI. I thank my friend and colleague from the Rules Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I, like so many Americans, have tried to be patient with this administration in extricating us from the difficulties we are in in Iraq. Like so many other Americans, I want to believe that our country is doing the right thing and we are taking the correct steps and doing everything that needs to be done to bring our troops home. But it is very difficult when we see and experience what we have experienced.

You know, first they told us that there were weapons of mass destruction. None were found. Yet the American people continued to be patient.

Then they told us we were in Iraq to remove a tyrant. We removed Saddam Hussein; our soldiers fought valiantly and well. Yet we are still there at the present time despite the fact that Saddam Hussein has been removed from power and has been executed.

Then they told us we were there to fight terrorism, and we have been fighting terrorism, and we continue to fight terrorism, and yet our troops remain there.

Now they tell us we are there to make our families safer. Well, I for one don't feel that my family is any safer today than they were when we went into Iraq. In fact, I think that my family is far less safe.

This administration tells us that we are there to fight terrorism, that we are there to fight al Qaeda, and yet we hear that al Qaeda is now stronger than it has been since before 9/11. So, again, I ask the question: Why are we in Iraq? Why are we sacrificing American lives? Twenty-six thousand have been injured; 3,600 Americans have been killed. Nearly a half trillion dollars has been spent, and yet still we are in Iraq and still we are no safer than we were before 9/11.

People ask me: What are we doing? How are we making our country safer? What are you doing to bring the troops home? And it is very difficult to answer because it is sort of like trying to hit a moving target. Every time that a benchmark is set, every time a question is asked, this administration moves the target. They tell us we are in Iraq on a surge that will tell us in 60 to 90 days where we will be. Then today we hear from this administration we only now can begin the surge because only now are we fully up to speed. Yet we see our Armed Forces at the weakest point they have been in many years.

Our National Guard is not where it should be, here State side; rather, our National Guard is overseas. They are not in a position to help should we need them here. Should we have another disaster like Hurricane Katrina, our National Guard is not here. Rather, they are serving overseas. These are the things that this administration has failed the American people on.

The violence in Iraq continues. The Iraq government has failed to meet the key benchmarks endorsed by the President in January, and political reconciliation is nonexistent.

And yet we as a Nation have not engaged the neighbors of Iraq. We have not gone forward and tried to bring a settlement to this. We have not engaged Iran. We have not engaged Syria. We have just continued to send troops to Iraq. Something has to be done.

Today we took the first step to do that. I was proud to be one of the representatives who voted for the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, as were 223 of my other colleagues here. It is an important step that we have taken. It is an important step for this Congress.

You know, I can't help but think, I have two teenaged children. What are we going to tell our children about why we were in Iraq? When our grandchildren read the history books and say to us, ''Members of Congress, what did you do to stop this war,'' what are we going to tell them? Well, today we took one step in telling them that we began the process. We are beginning the process to bring this war to an end and to bring our troops home. It is necessary. It is important. It is our responsibility as Members of Congress.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentleman for his poignant remarks. Your point is well taken when you talk about the benchmarks and the target moving. How many more times will we hear this administration argue that we are just about to make progress? And yet here we are, 4½ years later.

I would like to yield to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, I want to salute you for organizing this Special Order tonight on the very day where this new Congress rose to its constitutional duty and stood up for the American people who made a watershed historic change last November in terms of expecting us as Members of Congress to lead the way to a new direction in Iraq. The vote again today followed a succession which all of us here as new Members have been part of. I think it is fitting that we are here to discuss that change as the people who really made a difference in terms of changing control of this body.

The vote today was, as members of the Armed Services Committee and Ms.

SHEA-PORTER knows this, was all about what has happened to the military readiness of this country.

Chairman SKELTON is a passionate believer that this war has almost destroyed the ground forces of this country, the Army and the Marines. This was driven home to me during the July 4 recess. A young man, Army-enlist soldier, came to our district office. In one hand, he had his orders for redeployment, his fourth redeployment to Iraq. He had been to Iraq for two 1-year stints, and an additional stint of 7 months in Afghanistan. So over 4 years, 2 year and 7 months, he has been in a combat zone and barely been home for any rest time.

In his other hand, he had a bag filled with prescription medicine for anti-anxiety conditions. Zoloft was one of his prescriptions, which is a very serious medication for that type of condition. Yet we have a situation where he is being sent for the fourth time back into a combat zone. Luckily, our office was able to arrange for him to be seen by a psychiatrist, and a report was prepared which showed that he had full-blown post-traumatic stress, and we are making arrangements with the Army to ensure that he is not sent back into that situation.

But that is the dirty little secret about this surge policy, that we are forcing people who are not physically fit because they are not getting adequate rest time at home and, in many cases, who are mentally ill and being sent back into combat zone because of the taxing of our Armed Forces. It has reached the point where they have no other choice but to try and send people who again are well outside any normal guidelines in terms of rest, training and equipment which the Army has set up.

This bill today which we voted on and passed by an ever-increasing margin with each succeeding vote here, is an attempt to say as a Nation and as a Congress, which has the constitutional duty to raise the Armed Forces, that we have a duty to change course in Iraq to ensure that we have Armed Forces that are capable of addressing the real national security interests of this country.

□ 2330

Certainly being in the middle of a civil war in Iraq is not consistent with the national security interests of this country.

As Congresswoman SHEA-PORTER pointed out today, the front page of the Washington Post has pointed out that al Qaeda now has reached the level of strength that it had before the events of 9/11, that there are training camps in Pakistan that have been allowed to flourish because our eye was taken off the ball with the invasion of Iraq when we should have finished the job in Afghanistan back in 2002 and 2003.

We are now in a situation, as Mr. ARCURI just said, we are, in fact, as exposed and as vulnerable as this country was at the time of September 11 because of the outrageous, misguided policies of this administration.

This bill, which we voted on today, which sets out a very measured, responsible policy that will change course in Iraq, I think answers all the questions of the doubters and the cynics that we don't have an answer for what happens after a change of course that occurs in Iraq. This is not about Vietnam revisited where people are going to be evacuated in helicopters.

This bill lays out a responsible plan for real change in Iraq that addresses the need to approach this problem on a regional basis in the Middle East and reintroduces a diplomatic measure that has been sorely lacking in terms of this administration's policy over the last four-and-a-half years.

So, again, I think as new Members who are part of the new majority that have helped revive life in this branch of the government, which was a near rubber stamp over the last 4 years, it is important that I think we are here tonight to reemphasize what took place here in this chamber and to restate our mission to keep faith with the voters that took place last fall and make sure that we have a real change in policy in Iraq.

I'd like to yield now to Congressman ELLISON from the State of Minnesota who's again part of this new majority here in Congress.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm always happy to join my colleagues, the difference-makers, who heard the call of the American people and came to Congress to really make the case for a safer America, a stronger America; an America that is not mired down in the quagmire which is Iraq; an America that says, look, we are ready to defend American interest around the world, but that does not include being mired down in a war we never should have been in in the first place.

I'm proud to have voted for this safe redeployment act today, but I just want to point out something that's so very important; and that is, that while dollars and cents clearly are important in this debate, no one can calculate the loss of a loved one. Since this surge began, 600 families have received the most devastating news that any family can ever receive, 600 spouses, 600 sets of parents, 600 sets of children, 600 communities lost a loved one because of this surge that was wrong-headed from the very beginning.

We can't calculate the costs of this war in dollars really. It must be calculated in terms of the lives of our fellow Americans that have gone forward in this horrible conflict. We have to calculate this war in terms of the injuries and the casualties that have been faced, in terms of the young people who have lost limbs, who have lost their strong sense of mental health, their ability to discern reality, their ability to have a calm frame of mind because, for so many of these young people, the helicopter sounds don't stop even after they come home. For so many young people, the explosions, a car backing up, any sort of sound sends them back to that war zone they used to be in. And it's a horrible tragedy, it's a human tragedy, and no amount of calculation of dollars and cents will ever truly capture what we have lost as a Nation.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we stand here, the difference-makers, today we want to state to the American people that we are here to keep the faith with the American people. We will never forget all of our fellow Americans, our brothers and sisters who have gone forward in this conflict, who have lost lives, who have lost limbs, who have lost their health and their families, who have received an injury that is so impossible to ever heal from. But we know the resilience and the strength of the American people, and we know that they expect us to put their best interests first forward always, and that means a safe, responsible redeployment out of this conflict.

So, Mr. Speaker, just as I say that the losses in this war cannot simply be calculated in dollars and cents but in terms of real human lives, it is also true that they be calculated in dollars and cents as well.

And before I yield back, Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out this very important graph that I have right to my right, and this shows very clearly the costs of this war. It wasn't the $8 billion that we thought it was.

Now, we know it's 10 billion per month, but just look here. Per year we're talking about a number with so many zeros behind it I think that my young children will be very hard pressed to be able to pronounce this number. This is a huge number. What is this, this number is about 120 T, trillion? Billion. I think I need an arithmetic lesson, and I'm a fellow that's had a little bit of schooling.

But as I look at this big number, it will be a challenge for any fifth grader, Mr. Speaker. It's a whopper of a number and it can't even begin to calculate the true losses of our country in this war.

Mr. ARCURI. Just a point that I'd like to make on something that you said earlier, if you could comment on that.

We talk about money costs, but think of the amount of money that this Congress has had to appropriate for veterans benefits as a result of the staggering injuries, the staggering effects that this war has had on our veterans and on our military personnel, and I just think that that's something that I don't think that this administration thought about when they planned out Iraq. They didn't think about the number of wounded because, while our medical teams get better and better, we save many more lives, but obviously many, many more people receive injuries that they will suffer from the rest of their lives. And it's our duty and our responsibility as a Nation to take care

of those individuals, and the emotional costs to their family and obviously financial cost to this country of taking care of them is great.

And I just wanted to add that because that's something else that I don't think anyone thought about before we went into Iraq.

Mr. ELLISON. No doubt, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent point. What does it mean to care for a 20-year-old quadriplegic for the course of his or her life?

This chart speaks for itself, but I just want to go to the bottom line if I may, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at $3,816 per second.

Ms. SUTTON. I thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON), and the points raised are worth talking about. He's absolutely right when we talk about the loss of life, the irretrievable loss of life as being the real cost, the real measure of our loss.

Not too long ago during this surge, the escalation of this war, within this past 6 months, I had the very sad experience of I'm sure that many of you have had of going back to my district to go to visitation, to calling hours, for a fallen soldier. And on this occasion, I walked in and I was taken aback because family members, they thank you. They thank you for coming to pay your respects to this one who was willing to give it all for his country.

And as I walked in and I walked over to the casket where this brave soldier lay and there he was, this young man, and I kneeled down and I looked and I looked long and I looked hard because I wanted to remember and I wanted to feel all that I could so that when I came back here to cast the votes that we must cast and to make the decisions that we must make about the lives that are in our hands, to answer the questions about what we're willing to ask them to do and what we're willing to protect them from, I wanted that to be a part of who I am and the decisions I make.

So I carried that with me, and I carried it with me for the vote today, but I can't help but also share a very disappointing moment that happened later that day when I returned home, to hear the news and our President talking about how much he enjoyed riding his bike and how we should all ride our bikes because it's a healthy thing to do. Well, maybe so, but it struck me that this President, to my knowledge, doesn't go to many of those calling hours, and perhaps it would be different and perhaps the decision-making would be different because you're right, my colleague from Minnesota, the lives lost are irretrievable.

With that, I'd like to yield to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. HODES), who has joined us again.

Mr. HODES. Thank you. It's very moving, as we stand here, to think about the real impact, the effects of this misbegotten war on the people of this country. The war is a cancer on the body politic that it is our job to deal with. It's unfortunate.

We were sent to Congress, those of us who are here, largely to serve as catalysts for change. The legislation we passed today is that beginning, and I recall standing here where I'm now standing in the well of the House of Representatives a few weeks ago to welcome to this chamber men and women who had recently served their country, who were coming from Walter Reed, who had come from other military hospitals where, as my friend from New York Mr. ARCURI points out, the costs of dealing with the traumatic injuries that have been inflicted on more than 25,000 people in this war have not even begun to be calculated on the chart next to me. They run into so much money that the mind cannot grapple with it.

These brave men and women came to the floor. They came on crutches. They came in wheelchairs. And each one is a story of bravery and of sadness for me because I saw people whose lives were shattered, people without one leg, people without two legs, people without two legs and a arm, people without two legs and an arm, with traumatic brain injuries, and veterans in addition to the active duty wounded warriors who came here to meet Members of Congress and talk to us about the difficulties they were having in their lives, veterans for whom the Veterans Administration was not responsive, and we have dealt as a new Democratic majority with those issues as well.

I tried to think of what I could say. There was one soldier who sat in the front row with a young lady, it was his wife or his fiancé, who wanted to talk to us about what was really happening in Iraq. And he started by saying, I have three things to tell you. He said, number one, they're not telling you the real story about what's going on there. Number two, and he stopped because he'd forgotten number two. He couldn't get to it.

□ 2245

He had traumatic brain injury. I ask myself, what will it take for the President of this great country of ours, for those predominantly on the other side of the aisle who support a surge which has weakened our security, strengthened al Qaeda, weakened our military, continued the destruction of our reputation in the world; what will it take for this President to face the reality of what his policies have created, to come before the American people with courage and dignity and say, ''We have made some terrible mistakes, and it's time to correct them. We will change course, because I know it's the right thing to do. I know we must do it. We honor the service of all those who have served in this conflict. But now we will go and we will fight al Qaeda where we need to in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will deal and set our strategy in the Middle East so that we can effectively deal with the threat of Iran, the threat posed by Syria, the threat posed by Hezbollah in Lebanon, the threats posed by Hamas and Fattah in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We will, once again, reassert our leadership in the world with the moral courage, with the principles and the values and the dignity that the American people expect. We will face up to our past mistakes, but we will lead into the future with a comprehensive strategy to protect American security''?

I am waiting. The American people are waiting. Congress is waiting.

Enough name calling. We are all in this together. This is not a Republican or a Democratic issue. The comprehensive strategy that we have adopted today is an American issue that will move us forward. The real honor that this President and those who oppose a new direction can do to those brave men and women who came to this floor shattered is to acknowledge the past mistakes and move forward to strengthen America and protect us all.

Ms. SUTTON. It reminds me of a committee hearing yesterday, and we heard some discussion from one of the witnesses about courage. It was used in the context, you have to have the courage to go forward. Sometimes it takes courage to go forward.

I know that Mr. ARCURI and I together looked at each other, and thought sometimes it takes the courage that you spoke of, Mr. HODES, to admit when things aren't going right and changing direction. That is the kind of direction that we need in this country from our President, that we need for our troops from our President.

Mr. COURTNEY. One day last week, this past week, in Hartford, Connecticut, General Eric Shinseki came and spoke the to World Affairs Council in Hartford. He, speaking of courage, was the chief of the Army at the outset of the Iraq war, was asked the question by the Armed Services Committee, how many forces it would take to secure Iraq after the invasion. He said, hundreds of thousands of troops.

As we all know, what happened to him was that because the neoconservatives to dominated the administration at the time didn't want to hear that type of reality; instead, they were wedded to this view, that you could win the war on the cheap.

He was bounced out of the Army, after an incredibly distinguished career, decorated combat veteran in Vietnam, one of the people who did an incredible amount of work to bring our Armed Forces back after the debacle of Vietnam.

He spoke to the World Affairs Council on Monday and talked about what happened in the wake of Vietnam in terms of our Armed Forces, that the disillusionment and, you know, just the negative fallout that occurred in terms of people enlisting in the Army, departing well before their planned careers were going to actually come to fruition, caused great damage to the Armed Forces that took decades to recover, and that we as a Nation had finally gotten to a point where we had

not just people at the top level but also at the middle levels of the Army who had really gotten a strong, competent force back into place. His concern is that this war in Iraq is going to result in the same damage as an institution to the Army and the Marine Corps.

We are seeing it in terms of people departing the service, the mid-level officer corps. We again saw another example where the Army failed to hit its recruiting goals last month.

This bill today that we voted on was all about trying to repair the damage that has been done to the military readiness of this country, and General Shinseki, who I think will go down in history as a prophet in this country, as hopefully somebody who still has service to give to this Nation, maybe in a new administration some time or in some other role, is reminding us that we are at grave risk.

Again, the quality people, I know we saw it in Iraq when we went and visited, just wonderful, wonderful people serving in uniform in Iraq, helpful, smart, independent minded. But right now they are trapped in a policy by the administration that is basically telling them that their service is just being used in a way that shows no respect for their own wonderful qualities.

It is one of the main, most important reasons that this bill today that we voted on has got to get passed and signed into law. We have got to keep chipping away with vote after vote over the next few weeks or so to make sure that the gathering numbers we are picking up on these measures are going to get us to the point where real change is going to happen.

Ms. SUTTON. I would just ask the gentlewoman from New Hampshire to add to that, because I know that you hear a great deal in your role as a member of the Armed Services Committee. That is a point that is important for people to know about one of the consequences of this continuing path that we are going down in Iraq.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. It's very important. I sit on the Armed Services Committee and the Subcommittees on Personnel and Readiness. So I hear every day what the President's impact has had on personnel and on readiness. I would like to address both of them.

Supporting the troops is a lot more than putting a yellow ribbon on a car. The ''Support the Troops'' sound coming out of the White House rings hollow to my ears after 6 months on the Armed Services Committee. I will give you an example. Here we have the most wonderful troops in the world, committed volunteers who signed up out of love and patriotism for their country. It came time for a pay raise, and the President only wanted 3 percent.

The House of Representatives, bipartisan, said they wanted 3.5 percent pay raise. So, how much is 3.5 percent versus the President's percent? Well for an E–4, it would be $200 a year. I know, from sitting on the Personnel Subcommittee, what a strain this is on their families and the cost of having a loved one gone and having to get day care and having to get extra help and not having the same support system that they have when they have their spouse or family member with them.

Yet the President said 3 percent was sufficient. He was angry enough, when the House voted for a 3.5 percent pay raise, that he listed it as one of the reasons that he would consider vetoing the bill. If you can't give an E–4, who is serving his or her country, $200 a year, then all the talk you want about supporting the troops is hollow, and it really ranks sour for the rest of us.

You look at readiness, and you realize the Army has been so impacted by this, that I actually voted to grow the size of the Army. I also voted for the largest, we all did, the largest military budget in history.

As a direct result of the President's misguided policy, he has left us in such a weakened state around the world, that we have to grow the size of the Army. We have to put more incentives in there, and we have to put the largest budget in there.

You know, we do have enemies in this world. We know that. We have a lot of enemies. They weren't in Iraq, but we do have enemies.

Peter Pace, a general, was asked if he were comfortable with the ability of the United States to respond to an emerging threat around the world. He paused for a moment, and he said, no, I'm not comfortable. That should frighten all of us.

If the general doesn't feel that we could respond to an emerging threat because all of our resources and all of our treasure and all of our people are planted inside of Iraq, we have a real problem. This is why we had to have that vote today, and this is why we need to get out of this war.

You know, I have been very disturbed by the way it has been treated like a political issue. It's not.

The freshman class that came here to make the change have been going to Iraq at great personal risk to themselves to have a look and to be sure that they are right about their position against this war. One by one we have come back, as you know, and said, no, we were right about this. What we saw was horrific. We saw a very sad, destroyed country. We saw a country at war with itself in Iraq, and we saw our troops stuck in the middle of the civil war.

Fortunately, there are some Republicans who are now breaking away from the President's grip and speaking the truth about this war. I just wanted to read a couple of them. I will leave their names out, because who they are is not important, except to say that they are Senators.

Here's one, ''We need to be fighting terrorists, not civil wars . . . Iraq's peace is one they must win on their own. We cannot win it for them. Our might should be focused on stopping terrorists who are plotting to bring harm to the United States.''

Here is another Republican Senator, ''A policy of responsible military disengagement with a corresponding increase [in] nonmilitary support is the best way to advance our Nation's interests.''

Another one, ''There's nothing to wait for. Almost everybody that has any knowledge of the reports . . . would indicate they are not going to show any degree of a big change that we needed. So we are just wasting time.''

If we are going to fight terrorism, first of all, we need to protect our own homeland.

You know, if you know there is a burglar in the neighborhood, first thing you do is lock your own door. We didn't do that. If you look at the little money we have invested in Homeland Security, you will know that we are no safer than we were before 9/11, that we took the money and we went to Iraq.

Now why did we go to Iraq? I guess that's the question that hangs in everybody's mind. There were no Iraqis on the plane that day. There was no evidence that Iraq was ready to attack us. We were misled, misguided, got into this war. What's happened to us? Are we safer here? No, of course not.

Are we in more danger there? Yes. Have we destabilized the region? Yes. Do we have to worry about growth of al Qaeda? Yes.

However, the good news is, yesterday at a hearing on global security, there was a Member of the CIA and a couple of others who spoke, and they said that we do not have to fear Iran's sway over Iraq.

Let's remember, Iran and Iraq were bitter enemies who fought an 8-year war. They are not natural allies. They are only allies right now because of us. Once we leave, it's my fervent hope and belief that it will calm down.

Ms. SUTTON. I would like to turn to the gentleman from New York, because I know he has something important to add.

Mr. ARCURI. Let me say thank you, again, to my friend from Ohio for organizing this.

Let me just say, I hear throughout this debate, victory, victory, victory. The other side constantly talks about victory. But to my way of thinking, victory is long past.

What victory means at this time would be bringing as many of our troops home alive and safe as we possibly can. That's what victory means. That's what we should be trying to achieve, and that's what today was all about. I think that really is the most important thing that I think we achieved today.

Ms. SUTTON. It really is. Today was the day we passed the Responsible Redeployment From Iraq Act. It is about achieving that victory. We ask that the President join us in trying to take this into a different direction, a better direction for the country, for our troops.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CONYERS (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today after 3:00 p.m.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. MCNULTY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WATERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. DELAURO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. LEE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. TOWNS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. JEFFERSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HALL of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. ROHRABACHER) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, July 19.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. FORTENBERRY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. ROHRABACHER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCCOTTER, for 5 minutes, today.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. SUTTON. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 59 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, July 13, 2007, at 4 p.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

2435. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Asian Longhorned Beetle; Removal of Quarantined Area in Illinois [Docket No. APHIS-2006-0105] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2436. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Cold Treatment Regulations [Docket No. APHIS-2006-0050] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2437. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Indoxacarb; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2005-0149; FRL-8137-8] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2438. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Cymoxanil; Pesticide Tolerance [EPA-HQ-OPP-2006-0331; FRL-8130-5] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2439. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Chlorpropham, Linuron, Pebulate, Asulam, and Thiophanate-methyl; Tolerance Actions [EPA-HQ-OPP-2006-0483.; FRL-8131-6] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

2440. A letter from the Acting Deputy Administrator, Agency for International Development, transmitting a report of a violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act which occurred in the Agency for International Development, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1517(b); to the Committee on Appropriations.

2441. A letter from the Comptroller, Department of Defense, transmitting a report of a violation of the Antideficiency Act, Case Number 04-02, pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1517(b); to the Committee on Appropriations.

2442. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket No. FEMA-B-7703] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

2443. A letter from the Deputy Director, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Benefits Payable in Terminated Single-Employer Plans; Allocation of Assets in Single-Employer Plans; Interest Assumptions for Valuing and Paying Benefits — received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and Labor.

2444. A letter from the Director, Regulations Poilcy and Mgmt. Staff, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule — Human Cells, Tissues, and Cellular and Tissue-Based Products; Donor Screening and Testing, and Related Labeling [Docket No. 1997N-0484T] received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2445. A letter from the Regulations Coordinator, CMS, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's ''Major'' final rule — Medicaid Program; Citizenship Documentation Requirements [CMS-2557-F] (RIN: 0938-AO51) received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2446. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Revisions to the Arizona State Implementation Plan, Pinal County Air Quality Control District [EPA-R09-OAR-2006-0729; FRL-8439-2] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2447. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Criteria for the Safe and Environmentally Protective Use of Granular Mine Tailings known as ''Chat'' [EPA-HQ-RCRA-2006-0097; FRL-8326-1] (RIN: 2050-AG-27) received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2448. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of State Air Quality Plans for Designated Facilities and Pollutants; Delaware, and West Virginia; Control of Emissions from Existing Other Solid Waste Incinerator Units [EPA-R03-OAR-2007-0354; [FRL-8338-7]] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2449. A letter from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency's final rule — Approval and Promulgation of Air Quality Implementation Plans; Virginia; Update to Materials Incorporated by Reference [VA201-5201; FRL-8336-1] received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

2450. A letter from the Director, International Cooperation, Department of Defense, transmitting Pursuant to Section 27(f) of the Arms Export Control Act and Section 1(f) of Executive Order 11958, Transmittal No. 06-07 informing of an intent to sign Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) Projects Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and the Republic of Korea, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2767(f); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2451. A letter from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Copies of international agreements, other than treaties, entered into by the United States, pursuant to 1 U.S.C. 112b; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2452. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting pursuant to section 36(b)(5)(A) of the Arms Export Control Act, relating to enhancements and upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 06-70 of 27 September 2006 (Transmittal No. 0A-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2453. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting pursuant to Section 62(a) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), notification concerning the Department of the Navy's proposed lease of defense articles to the Government of France (Transmittal No. 01-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2454. A letter from the Deputy Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, Transmittal No. 07-27, concerning the Department of the Army's proposed Letter(s)of Offer and Acceptance to Brazil for defense articles and services; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2455. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed technical assistance agreement for the export of defense services, including technical data, and defense services to the Republic of Korea (Transmittal No. DDTC 044-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2456. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment abroad with the Government of Germany (Transmittal No. DDTC 018-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2457. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment abroad to the Republic of Korea (Transmittal No. DDTC 054-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2458. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment with the Government of Japan (Transmittal No. DDTC 040-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2459. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment with the Government of Japan (Transmittal No. DDTC 011-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2460. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of significant military equipment with the Government of Norway (Transmittal No. DDTC 021-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2461. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles to the Government of Colombia (Transmittal No. DDTC 038-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2462. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of Israel (Transmittal No. DDTC 056-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2463. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of Pakistan (Transmittal No. DDTC 025-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2464. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of the United Arab Emirates (Transmittal No. DDTC 017-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2465. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed license for the export of major defense equipment and defense articles to the Commonwealth of Australia (Transmittal No. DDTC 041-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2466. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed technical assistance agreement for the export of technical data, defense services, and defense articles with the Government of Israel (Transmittal No. DDTC 015-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2467. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, re-certification of the proposed manufacturing license agreement for the manufacture of defense articles with the Government of Japan (Transmittal No. DDTC 028-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2468. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification of a proposed amendment to a license for the export of defense articles and services to the Government of Canada (Transmittal No. DDTC 027-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2469. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed technical assistance agreement for defense services to the Commonwealth of Australia (Transmittal No. DDTC 023-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2470. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 3(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed transfer of major defense equipment from the Government of Norway (Transmittal No. RSAT-10-06); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2471. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting pursuant to section 3(d) of the Arms Export Control Act, certification regarding the proposed transfer of major defense equipment from the Government of Jordan (Transmittal No. RSAT-02-07); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2472. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a copy a determination made pursuant to Section 1306 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2003, Pub. L. 107-314; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2473. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting a copy of D.C. ACT 17-70, ''Safe and Stable Homes for Children and Youth Amendment Act of 2007,'' pursuant to D.C. Code section 1-233(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

2474. A letter from the Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Fisheries (RIN: 0648-XA57) received June 18, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

2475. A letter from the Director, Statutory Import Programs Staff, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in the Insular Possessions Watch, Watch Movement and Jewelry Programs 2006 [Docket No. 0612243019-7062-02] (RIN: 0625-AA72) received July 10, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

2476. A letter from the Regulations Coordinator, CMS, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's ''Major'' final rule — Medicaid Program; Prescription Drugs [CMS-2238-FC] (RIN: 0938-AO20) received July 9, 2007, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means.

2477. A letter from the Board Members, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting the 2007 annual report on the financial status of the railroad unemployment insurance system, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 369; jointly to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure and Ways and Means.

2478. A letter from the Board Members, Railroad Retirement Board, transmitting a report on the actuarial status of the railroad retirement system, including any recommendations for financing changes, pursuant to 45 U.S.C. 231f-1; jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means and Transportation and Infrastructure.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. BARROW (for himself and Mr. GRAVES):

H.R. 3009. A bill to enhance transparency of trading in over-the-counter derivatives in natural gas; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia (for himself, Mr. BARROW, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. ELLISON):

H.R. 3010. A bill to amend chapter 1 of title 9 of United States Code with respect to arbitration; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. TOWNS (for himself, Mr. HALL of Texas, and Mr. WHITFIELD):

H.R. 3011. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure adequate payment amounts for drugs and biologicals under part B of the Medicare Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BACHUS (for himself, Mr. GILLMOR, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California, and Mr. LATOURETTE):

H.R. 3012. A bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to provide for the establishment of fair mortgage practices, generally, and for subprime mortgages in particular, to provide for a national system for licensing or registering residential mortgage loan originators, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SCOTT of Virginia (for himself, Mr. FORBES, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Mr. COBLE, Mr. FEENEY, and Mr. ROSKAM):

H.R. 3013. A bill to provide appropriate protection to attorney-client privileged communications and attorney work product; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. SOLIS (for herself, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. BACA, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Ms. BORDALLO, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CARDOZA, Ms. CARSON, Ms. CASTOR, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. CLARKE, Mr. CLAY, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. COSTA, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. DAVIS of Alabama, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mrs. JONES of Ohio, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. KILPATRICK, Ms. LEE, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mr.

MEEKS of New York, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Ms. NORTON, Mr. ORTIZ, Mr. PASTOR, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. REYES, Mr. RUSH, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. FORTUÑO, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. HONDA, Mr. HOYER, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Mr. JEFFERSON, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. SIRES, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. TOWNS, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Ms. WATERS, Ms. WATSON, Mr. WATT, and Mr. WYNN):

H.R. 3014. A bill to improve the health of minority individuals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Ways and Means, Education and Labor, Natural Resources, and the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. CHABOT (for himself and Ms. VELÁZQUEZ):

H.R. 3015. A bill to delay the applicability to webcasters of rates and terms determined by the Copyright Royalty Judges for certain statutory licenses under title 17, United States Code; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. BERKLEY (for herself, Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. SHAYS, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. RAMSTAD, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Ms. DEGETTE, Mrs. MUSGRAVE, Mr. CROWLEY, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. BECERRA, and Mr. CARTER):

H.R. 3016. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the tip tax credit to employers of cosmetologists and to promote tax compliance in the cosmetology sector; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mrs. BIGGERT:

H.R. 3017. A bill to authorize additional appropriations for the Federal Bureau of Investigation to enhance its ability to more effectively stop mortgage fraud, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. BIGGERT:

H.R. 3018. A bill to provide for payment of an administrative fee to public housing agencies to cover the costs of administering family self-sufficiency programs in connection with the housing choice voucher program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. BIGGERT:

H.R. 3019. A bill to establish an Office of Housing Counseling to carry out and coordinate the responsibilities of the Department of Housing and Urban Development regarding counseling on homeownership and rental housing issues, to make grants to entities for providing such counseling, to launch a national housing counseling advertising campaign, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. CHABOT (for himself, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. CUELLAR, Ms. CLARKE, and Mr. LIPINSKI):

H.R. 3020. A bill to amend the Small Business Act to improve the Microloan program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Small Business.

By Mr. CHANDLER (for himself, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, and Mr. KILDEE):

H.R. 3021. A bill to direct the Secretary of Education to make grants and low-interest loans to local educational agencies for the construction, modernization, or repair of public kindergarten, elementary, and secondary educational facilities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Mr. COSTA (for himself and Mr. NUNES):

H.R. 3022. A bill to designate the John Krebs Wilderness in the State of California, to add certain land to the Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park Wilderness, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. DEFAZIO (for himself, Mr. STARK, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. CHANDLER, and Mr. HINCHEY):

H.R. 3023. A bill to require the manufacturers, packers, and distributors of prescription drugs and medical devices to disclose certain gifts provided in connection with detailing, promotional, or other marketing activities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Ms. DEGETTE (for herself, Mr. SALAZAR, Mrs. CAPPS, and Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania):

H.R. 3024. A bill to amend titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act to provide States with the option to provide nurse home visitation services under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. DOGGETT (for himself, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. BERMAN, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. COHEN, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. EMANUEL, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mr. HINCHEY, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mrs. LOWEY, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. MICHAUD, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. NADLER, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Ms. NORTON, Mr. ORTIZ, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. STARK, Mr. WEINER, and Mr. WYNN):

H.R. 3025. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide comprehensive improvements to the Medicare Prescription Drug Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mrs. DRAKE:

H.R. 3026. A bill to authorize the Military Spouse Legacy Association, Inc., to establish a commemorative work on Federal land in the District of Columbia and its environs to honor all those who have put their country first as military spouses throughout our Nation's history; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. ELLISON:

H.R. 3027. A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to require the electronic recording of custodial interrogations in Federal criminal cases; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. FORTENBERRY (for himself, Mr. PAYNE, and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey):

H.R. 3028. A bill to end the use of child soldiers in hostilities around the world, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. GRIJALVA (for himself, Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. FARR, Mr. FORTENBERRY, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. SERRANO, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. KUCINICH, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. NADLER, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. HINCHEY, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois):

H.R. 3029. A bill to conserve global bear populations by prohibiting the importation, exportation, and interstate trade of bear viscera and items, products, or substances containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, bear viscera, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. HOOLEY:

H.R. 3030. A bill to amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to improve the summer food service program for children; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Mr. INSLEE (for himself, Mr. WEINER, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, and Mr. GRIJALVA):

H.R. 3031. A bill to promote the construction of green buildings in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, Education and Labor, Oversight and Government Reform, Financial Services, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. JONES of North Carolina:

H.R. 3032. A bill to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to permit candidates for election for Federal office to designate an individual who will be authorized to disburse funds of the authorized campaign committees of the candidate in the event of the death of the candidate; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mrs. MALONEY of New York (for herself and Mr. TOWNS):

H.R. 3033. A bill to improve Federal agency awards and oversight of contracts and assistance and to strengthen accountability of the Government-wide suspension and debarment system; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. MOORE of Kansas (for himself, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, and Mr. TIAHRT):

H.R. 3034. A bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 127 South Elm Street in Gardner, Kansas, as the ''Private First Class Shane R. Austin Post Office''; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. PAYNE (for himself, Mr. PORTER, and Mr. BILIRAKIS):

H.R. 3035. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Jerry Lewis in recognition of his outstanding service to the Nation; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. SARBANES:

H.R. 3036. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 regarding environmental education, and for other

purposes; to the Committee on Education and Labor.

By Ms. SCHWARTZ:

H.R. 3037. A bill to ensure that all Federal agencies consider the environmentally preferable features and practices of a vendor in purchases of meeting and conference services; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. SESSIONS:

H.R. 3038. A bill to amend section 1848 of the Social Security Act to establish standards for growth in Medicare expenditures for physicians' services based on categories of services; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SMITH of Nebraska (for himself, Mr. LINDER, Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. PEARCE, Mr. KLINE of Minnesota, Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. GINGREY, Mr. PITTS, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. AKIN, Mr. HERGER, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. SHADEGG, and Mr. MCCARTHY of California):

H.R. 3039. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the time that taxpayers may use to make a tax-free exchange of like kind property; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. SPACE:

H.R. 3040. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide additional educational assistance under the Montgomery GI Bill to veterans pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, or math; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. STUPAK (for himself and Mr. RUSH):

H.R. 3041. A bill to amend title XIX of the Social Security Act to reduce the costs of prescription drugs for enrollees of Medicaid managed care organizations by extending the discounts offered under fee-for-service Medicaid to such organizations; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. THOMPSON of California (for himself, Mr. RAMSTAD, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. MARSHALL, Mr. HOLDEN, and Mr. FARR):

H.R. 3042. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to extend for 6 months the eligibility period for the ''Welcome to Medicare'' physical examination and to eliminate coinsurance for screening mammography and colorectal cancer screening tests in order to promote the early detection of cancer; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. DEAL of Georgia (for himself, Mr. BAIRD, Mr. CASTLE, Mr. UPTON, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. GINGREY, and Mr. MILLER of North Carolina):

H. Con. Res. 182. Concurrent resolution recognizing the need to pursue research into the causes, a treatment, and an eventual cure for idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, supporting the goals and ideals of National Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Week, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Mr. MCCOTTER, and Mr. ACKERMAN):

H. Con. Res. 183. Concurrent resolution calling on the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan to immediately release Farhad Aliyev and Rafiq Aliyev from detention during trial, to assure that their right to a fair and open trial before an independent and impartial tribunal will be carried out, and to comply with all its international human rights agreements and commitments respecting the rule of law, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. SALI:

H. Con. Res. 184. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress opposing removal of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers for fishery restoration purposes, supporting the renewable energy that the dams produce, and agreeing that their removal does not make sound environmental nor fiscal sense; to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. EMANUEL:

H. Res. 540. A resolution electing a Member to a certain standing committee of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. TERRY (for himself, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. SAXTON, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. COLE of Oklahoma, Mr. HALL of Texas, Mr. ORTIZ, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. LAMBORN, Ms. FALLIN, Mr. KUHL of New York, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. WESTMORELAND, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. BOUSTANY, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, and Mr. CANNON):

H. Res. 541. A resolution recognizing the Marines of Company M (or ''Mike Company'') of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division on the occasion of their 25th Annual Reunion; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida:

H. Res. 542. A resolution expressing the unconditional support of the House of Representatives for the members of the National Guard; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. MARKEY (for himself and Mr. SMITH of New Jersey):

H. Res. 543. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States Postal Service should issue a semipostal stamp to support medical research relating to Alzheimer's disease; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. TIAHRT (for himself, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, Mr. MOORE of Kansas, and Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas):

H. Res. 544. A resolution expressing the sympathy and pledging the support of the House of Representatives and the people of the United States for the victims of the devastating thunderstorms that caused severe flooding in 20 counties in eastern Kansas beginning on June 26, 2007; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 23: Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. SULLIVAN, and Mr. LOEBSACK.

H.R. 39: Mr. RANGEL.

H.R. 44: Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 89: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts.

H.R. 278: Mr. BAIRD.

H.R. 368: Mr. CARNEY, Mr. LAMPSON, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. KLEIN of Florida, and Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida.

H.R. 380: Mr. WELCH of Vermont.

H.R. 398: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 406: Mr. LARSON of Connecticut and Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts.

H.R. 473: Mr. MICA.

H.R. 601: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 621: Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. ALTMIRE, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. TIBERI.

H.R. 643: Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. PICKERING, and Mr. HOLDEN.

H.R. 654: Mr. ISRAEL.

H.R. 695: Mr. ALTMIRE, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, and Ms. SOLIS.

H.R. 719: Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, Mr. DONNELLY, and Mrs. MYRICK.

H.R. 728: Mr. ROTHMAN.

H.R. 743: Mr. LUCAS, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, and Mr. COLE of Oklahoma.

H.R. 756: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 758: Mr. COURTNEY.

H.R. 782: Mr. COBLE.

H.R. 814: Ms. HARMAN.

H.R. 819: Mr. RUSH.

H.R. 864: Mr. ALLEN.

H.R. 881: Mr. ACKERMAN.

H.R. 940: Mrs. MYRICK.

H.R. 962: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1000: Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. WATERS, Mr. CLYBURN, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, and Ms. WATSON.

H.R. 1022: Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 1042: Mr. SHAYS.

H.R. 1064: Mr. MCNULTY.

H.R. 1073: Mr. ACKERMAN.

H.R. 1103: Ms. WATERS.

H.R. 1108: Mr. BARROW.

H.R. 1110: Mr. MITCHELL, Mr. GOODLATTE, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. COSTELLO, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. SPRATT, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Ms. SOLIS, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts.

H.R. 1113: Mr. SIRES, Mr. WAMP, Mr. SCHIFF, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. BERRY, and Ms. SOLIS.

H.R. 1125: Ms. HOOLEY, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. HILL, and Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina.

H.R. 1190: Mr. BARROW, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, and Mrs. JONES of Ohio.

H.R. 1194: Mr. CAMPBELL of California, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. WEXLER, and Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York.

H.R. 1232: Mr. HINOJOSA.

H.R. 1236: Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Mr. PERLMUTTER, and Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia.

H.R. 1245: Mr. RUSH and Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida.

H.R. 1275: Mr. MCDERMOTT.

H.R. 1282: Mr. CHANDLER.

H.R. 1302: Mr. MATHESON, Mr. MCNERNEY, and Mrs. TAUSCHER.

H.R. 1304: Mr. BROWN of South Carolina.

H.R. 1310: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1354: Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California.

H.R. 1363: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. FERGUSON, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. SCHIFF.

H.R. 1376: Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. STARK.

H.R. 1390: Mr. SOUDER.

H.R. 1416: Mr. LEVIN.

H.R. 1419: Mr. HOEKSTRA, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. EHLERS, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. PENCE, and Mr. DAVIS of Alabama.

H.R. 1439: Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1459: Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. UPTON, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, and Mr. HAYES.

H.R. 1464: Mr. CUMMINGS.

H.R. 1474: Mr. HASTINGS of Florida and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1475: Mr. INSLEE.

H.R. 1479: Mr. ACKERMAN.

H.R. 1537: Mr. BRADY of Texas and Mr. MOLLOHAN.

H.R. 1542: Mr. MCNULTY and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1567: Mr. GALLEGLY and Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia.

H.R. 1584: Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. FEENEY, and Mr. MARSHALL.

H.R. 1610: Mr. ROTHMAN, Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky, Mr. GRAVES, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. BONNER, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. PAYNE, and Mrs. CAPITO.

H.R. 1621: Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin.

H.R. 1647: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. STUPAK, Mr. SPRATT, Mr. BOUCHER, and Mrs. CUBIN.

H.R. 1657: Mr. ABERCROMBIE and Mr. WU.

H.R. 1663: Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas.

H.R. 1665: Mr. LYNCH, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. ROTHMAN, and Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 1671: Mr. SESTAK.

H.R. 1673: Mr. WATT.

H.R. 1687: Mr. ALTMIRE.

H.R. 1709: Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. GRIJALVA, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Ms. ESHOO, and Mr. PALLONE.

H.R. 1713: Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ.

H.R. 1727: Mr. BERMAN, Mrs. CAPPS, and Ms. HARMAN.

H.R. 1728: Mrs. CHRISTENSEN.

H.R. 1755: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts.

H.R. 1767: Mr. SESSIONS.

H.R. 1776: Mr. JONES of North Carolina.

H.R. 1783: Ms. GIFFORDS, Mr. LATOURETTE, and Mrs. TAUSCHER.

H.R. 1790: Mr. HINCHEY.

H.R. 1818: Mr. COHEN and Mr. GUTIERREZ.

H.R. 1845: Mr. WALBERG, Mr. SPRATT, and Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN.

H.R. 1878: Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. BOUCHER, and Ms. LEE.

H.R. 1888: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 1895: Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 1911: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1926: Mr. HOLDEN and Mr. BROWN of South Carolina.

H.R. 1932: Mr. ELLISON.

H.R. 1957: Mr. ROTHMAN.

H.R. 1968: Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. COHEN, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1992: Ms. SLAUGHTER.

H.R. 2005: Mr. HINOJOSA and Mr. JONES of North Carolina.

H.R. 2012: Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky.

H.R. 2035: Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky.

H.R. 2045: Mrs. MUSGRAVE and Mr. PRICE of North Carolina.

H.R. 2060: Mr. PLATTS, Mr. RODRIGUEZ, Ms. BEAN, Ms. WATSON, and Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas.

H.R. 2095: Ms. HOOLEY and Mr. WU.

H.R. 2110: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2122: Mr. MOORE of Kansas, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. WU, and Ms. SOLIS.

H.R. 2125: Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey and Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 2129: Mr. LANTOS, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. HONDA, and Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.

H.R. 2138: Mr. MEEKS of New York, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. BOSWELL, Mr. MICHAUD, and Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.

H.R. 2159: Mr. OBERSTAR.

H.R. 2165: Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida.

H.R. 2183: Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

H.R. 2205: Mr. BRADY of Texas.

H.R. 2210: Mr. GRIJALVA.

H.R. 2211: Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. CARNAHAN, and Mr. CAPUANO.

H.R. 2221: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 2274: Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN.

H.R. 2280: Mr. PITTS, Mr. NUNES, Mr. HINOJOSA, and Mr. CARNEY.

H.R. 2287: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2295: Mr. BAKER, Mr. FEENEY, and Mr. ROGERS of Alabama.

H.R. 2303: Mr. HENSARLING.

H.R. 2315: Mr. JORDAN, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2327: Ms. HARMAN and Mr. CASTLE.

H.R. 2342: Ms. HARMAN.

H.R. 2343: Mr. SOUDER.

H.R. 2347: Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. RANGEL, and Mr. GERLACH.

H.R. 2370: Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. FORBES, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. EHLERS, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 2373: Mr. MEEK of Florida.

H.R. 2380: Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. CARDOZA, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. PICKERING, and Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas.

H.R. 2443: Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, and Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 2449: Mr. GORDON.

H.R. 2468: Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. NADLER, and Mr. MCGOVERN.

H.R. 2526: Mr. SIRES.

H.R. 2548: Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. BERMAN, and Ms. WATSON.

H.R. 2550: Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. PAUL, Mr. CAMP of Michigan, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2564: Mr. INGLIS of South Carolina.

H.R. 2567: Mr. TERRY and Mr. SHAYS.

H.R. 2581: Mr. ELLISON.

H.R. 2587: Mr. TANNER, Mr. COOPER, Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee, and Mr. GORDON.

H.R. 2593: Mr. GONZALEZ.

H.R. 2604: Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. DELAHUNT, and Mr. JACKSON of Illinois.

H.R. 2617: Mr. BRADY of Texas.

H.R. 2629: Mr. WALDEN of Oregon and Mr. HASTINGS of Washington.

H.R. 2659: Mr. CARNEY.

H.R. 2666: Ms. CLARKE and Ms. LEE.

H.R. 2674: Mr. LEVIN.

H.R. 2723: Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Mr. MATHESON, and Mr. CAPUANO.

H.R. 2740: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, and Mr. SPRATT.

H.R. 2746: Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 2761: Mr. DONNELLY.

H.R. 2762: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. MOORE of Kansas, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. ALLEN, and Mr. NUNES.

H.R. 2774: Mr. ROHRABACHER, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2818: Mr. RAMSTAD.

H.R. 2828: Ms. KILPATRICK, Mr. BOYD of Florida, Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. WAMP, Ms. WATSON, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. ACKERMAN, Mr. KIRK, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, and Mr. BISHOP of Georgia.

H.R. 2831: Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. SESTAK, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. BERMAN, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, Mr. BOSWELL, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. COHEN, Ms. SOLIS, Mr. JACKSON of Illinois, Ms. GIFFORDS, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mr. HODES, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. KILPATRICK, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. MILLER of North Carolina, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. SIRES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. POMEROY, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. WILSON of Ohio, Mr. WATT, and Mr. LEVIN.

H.R. 2847: Ms. LEE, Mr. WYNN, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. INSLEE.

H.R. 2850: Mr. GORDON.

H.R. 2860: Mr. CHANDLER, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, and Mr. GOODE.

H.R. 2862: Mr. REGULA.

H.R. 2878: Mr. PICKERING.

H.R. 2894: Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. SHUSTER, Mrs. EMERSON, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, Mr. HOYER, and Ms. KILPATRICK.

H.R. 2910: Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. SOUDER, and Mr. SPRATT.

H.R. 2922: Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. MCNULTY, Mr. WAXMAN, and Mr. ABERCROMBIE.

H.R. 2926: Mr. CARNAHAN.

H.R. 2934: Mr. BAIRD, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. GRAVES, and Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland.

H.R. 2941: Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee.

H.R. 2942: Mr. GERLACH, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. HAYES, and Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.

H.R. 2952: Mr. STUPAK.

H.R. 2954: Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BUYER, and Mr. GOODLATTE.

H.R. 2956: Ms. PELOSI, Mr. HOYER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. LANTOS, Mr. OBEY, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. EMANUEL, Mrs. TAUSCHER, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BECERRA, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. PALLONE, Ms. CASTOR, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Mr. HODES, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. WALZ of Minnesota, Mr. PATRICK MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. COHEN, Mr. HARE, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. LOEBSACK, Ms. CLARKE, Mr. KAGEN, Ms. GIFFORDS, Mr. MAHONEY of Florida, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. MEEK of Florida, Mrs. DAVIS of California, and Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas.

H.R. 2963: Mr. BACA.

H.J. Res. 28: Mr. HONDA, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Ms. WATSON, Mr. JEFFERSON, Mr. GUTIERREZ, and Mr. PAYNE.

H. Con. Res. 10: Mr. FILNER.

H. Con. Res. 28: Mr. MCNERNEY.

H. Con. Res. 40: Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia.

H. Con. Res. 111: Mr. KUHL of New York, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. MOORE of Kansas, Mr. ABERCROMBIE, and Mr. MCHUGH.

H. Con. Res. 122: Mr. MOORE of Kansas.

H. Con. Res. 136: Mr. WELLER.

H. Con. Res. 139: Mr. GONZALEZ.

H. Con. Res. 157: Mr. CALVERT, and Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California.

H. Con. Res. 176: Ms. WATSON and Mr. WOLF.

H. Con. Res. 181: Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H. Res. 49: Mr. KILDEE.

H. Res. 95: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.

H. Res. 111: Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, and Mr. SAXTON.

H. Res. 121: Mr. WEXLER.

H. Res. 143: Mr. CLAY.

H. Res. 146: Mr. ROTHMAN.

H. Res. 235: Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. COHEN, Mr. CUELLAR, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. CHABOT, and Mr. NADLER.

H. Res. 245: Mr. WEXLER and Mr. MCNERNEY.

H. Res. 333: Mr. FARR and Mr. FILNER.

H. Res. 378: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas.

H. Res. 417: Mr. NADLER.

H. Res. 433: Mr. SHAYS and Mr. ENGEL.

H. Res. 443: Mr. BROWN of South Carolina and Mr. SERRANO.

H. Res. 444: Ms. FALLIN.

H. Res. 536: Mr. HOYER, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois.

H. Res. 539: Mrs. DRAKE, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. ETHERIDGE, Mr. HOLDEN, Mr. WELCH of Vermont, and Ms. WATSON.