

I rise in opposition to the Obama administration's war strategy in Afghanistan and to the war funding contained in this bill. It is evident to me that this strategy is not working. Just this past weekend, CIA Director Leon Panetta said on national television that, regarding Taliban insurgents, "We have seen no evidence that they are truly interested in reconciliation where they would surrender their arms, where they would denounce al-Qaeda, where they would really try to become part of that society."

One day later, General Petraeus—our newly named commander for the war in Afghanistan—told the Congress "... whether or not very senior [Taliban] leaders can meet the very clear conditions that the Afghan government has laid down for reconciliation I think is somewhat in question. So in that regard, I agree with Director Panetta." Substitute "Viet Cong" for "Taliban" and "South Vietnamese government" for "Afghan government" and you'll understand why all of this sounds painfully familiar. It's because we've seen this before, and we know how it ends. I do not say these things lightly, as I voted for the authorization for the use of force in 2001 in order to find and bring to justice the al Qaeda leaders who organized the 9/11 attacks against our country.

Unfortunately, the previous administration did not put enough troops on the ground to prevent bin Laden's escape, and nearly 9 years later he and his key lieutenants whereabouts remain a mystery to our intelligence community, as Director Panetta acknowledged last weekend. In other words, the original rationale for going to Afghanistan is gone. We face a nationalist insurgency that we cannot defeat militarily and that will not negotiate a political settlement with the corrupt Afghan government.

We have tripled the number of troops on the ground since the beginning of 2009, and the violence has only soared. Every day we remain only increases our national debt and subjects our troops to needless peril. Indeed, every month we squander enough money on this war that could otherwise be used to put an additional 38,000 police on our streets for a full year, or to prevent massive teacher layoffs in every state, particularly New Jersey. The cost of this war is directly imperiling the hometown security of communities across this nation and the economic security of our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, when President Obama asked us to support his new strategy, I did so reluctantly and with this caveat: I would give the President time to show his approach could work, but that my patience had limits. In the nearly 18 months that President Obama has had the opportunity to demonstrate his approach, we've tripled the number of Americans in Afghanistan, our

casualties have skyrocketed, and the insurgency has deepened and spread across the country. My patience, and now support for this strategy, have evaporated. We do more harm than good by staying: more harm to our troops and our economy, and more harm to innocent Afghans who too often are caught in the crossfire. It's time for us to go, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting to bring our troops home by ending funding for this conflict.

The bill before us makes critical investments in education which are fully paid for by cutting funds from existing programs. The current economic downturn has hit school districts hard, and many are being forced to cut services. Previously, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act made several sound investments in public education to keep teachers in the classroom and help school districts avoid painful cuts. Most, if not all, of this emergency funding has been spent.

Further, at this most critical time, Governor Christie made the wrong call in cutting state aid to our local schools. The \$10 billion included for the Education Jobs Fund will help keep teachers in the classroom and make sure that class sizes do not balloon next fall. This much needed funding will help preserve 140,000 teaching jobs nationwide. This package also contains almost \$5 billion, fully offset as well, to ensure college students who receive Pell Grants, 8 million this year, will have the financial support for college they need.