Iraq May 21, 2007 Many of my colleagues, faced with the reality that the war in Iraq is not going well, line up to place all the blame on the president. The president “mismanaged” the war, they say. “It’s all the president’s fault,” they claim. In reality, much of the blame should rest with Congress, which shirked its constitutional duty to declare war and instead told the president to decide for himself whether or not to go to war. More than four years into that war, Congress continues to avoid its constitutional responsibility to exercise policy oversight, particularly considering the fact that the original authorization no longer reflects the reality on the ground in Iraq . According to the original authorization (Public Law 107-243) passed in late 2002, the president was authorized to use military force against Iraq to achieve the following two specific objectives only: “(1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq ; and (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq ” I was highly critical of the resolution at the time, because I don’t think the United States should ever go to war to enforce United Nations resolutions. I was also skeptical of the claim that Iraq posed a “continuing threat” to the United States . As it turned out, Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, no al-Qaeda activity, and no ability to attack the United States . Regardless of this, however, when we look at the original authorization for the use of force it is clearly obvious that our military has met both objectives. Our military very quickly removed the regime of Saddam Hussein, against whom the United Nations resolutions were targeted. A government approved by the United States has been elected in post-Saddam Iraq , fulfilling the first objective of the authorization. With both objectives of the original authorization completely satisfied, what is the legal ground for our continued involvement in Iraq ? Why has Congress not stepped up to the plate and revisited the original authorization? This week I plan to introduce legislation that will add a sunset clause to the original authorization (Public Law 107-243) six months after passage. This is designed to give Congress ample time between passage and enactment to craft another authorization or to update the existing one. With the original objectives fulfilled, Congress has a legal obligation to do so. Congress also has a moral obligation to our troops to provide relevant and coherent policy objectives in Iraq . Unlike other proposals, this bill does not criticize the president’s handling of the war. This bill does not cut off funds for the troops. This bill does not set a timetable for withdrawal. Instead, it recognizes that our military has achieved the objectives as they were spelled out in law and demands that Congress live up to its constitutional obligation to provide oversight. I am hopeful that this legislation will enjoy broad support among those who favor continuing or expanding the war as well as those who favor ending the war. We need to consider anew the authority for Iraq and we need to do it sooner rather than later.