March 26, 2007 Last week the House passed an emergency supplemental spending bill that was the worst of all worlds. The president's request would have already set a spending record, but the Democratic leadership packed 21 billion additional dollars of mostly pork barrel spending in attempt to win Democrat votes. The total burden on the American taxpayer for this bill alone will be an astonishing 124 billion dollars. Democrats promised to oppose the war by adding more money to fight the war than even the president requested. I am pleased to have joined with the majority of my Republican colleagues to oppose this bill. Among the pork added to attract votes was more than 200 million dollars to the dairy industry, 74 million for peanut farmers, and 25 million dollars for spinach farmers. Also, the bill included more than two billion dollars in unconstitutional foreign aid, including half a billion dollars for Lebanon and Eastern Europe. What might be most disturbing, however, is the treatment of veterans in the bill. Playing politics with the funding of critical veterans medical and other assistance by adding it onto a controversial bill to attract votes strikes me as highly inappropriate. Veterans' funding should be included in a properly structured, comprehensive appropriations bill. Better still, veterans spending should be automatically funded and not subject to yearly politicking and nit-picking. While I have been opposed to the war in Iraq from the beginning and do believe that there is a strong constitutional role for Congress when it comes to war, I could not support what appeared to be micro-management of the war in this bill. There is a distinction between the legitimate oversight role of Congress and attempts to meddle in the details of how the war is to be fought. The withdrawal and readiness benchmarks in this bill are in my view inappropriate. That is why the president has threatened to veto this bill. In the last Congress I co-sponsored legislation urging the president to come up with a plan to conclude our military activity in Iraq, but that legislation contained no date-specific deadlines to complete withdrawal. Once again Congress wants to have it both ways. Back in 2002, Congress passed the authorization for the president to attack Iraq if and when he saw fit. By ignoring the Constitution, which clearly requires a declaration of war, Congress could wash its hands of responsibility after the war began going badly by citing the ambiguity of its authorization. This time, House leaders want to appear to be opposing the war by including problematic benchmarks, but they include language to allow the president to waive these if he sees fit. To top it off, House leadership may have actually made war with Iran more likely. The bill originally contained language making it clear that the president would need congressional authorization before attacking Iran – as the Constitution requires. But this language was dropped after special interests demanded its removal. This move can reasonably be interpreted as de facto congressional authority for an attack on Iran. Let's hope that does not happen.