for our military will go to procure vital weapons systems, to further research, to develop new technologies, and to fund military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill also includes a 3.1-percent pay raise for soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

Mr. Speaker, we have the most dominant military in the history of the world, and this bill will keep it that way. With this funding, we are giving our defenders the tools they need to keep us safe.

URGING SUPPORT FOR SUCCESSFUL WITHDRAWAL STRATEGY FROM IRAQ

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

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the previous question on the rule on the defense appropriation bill so that the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) might give us an opportunity to vote, to consider and vote on her amendment, which actually contains a strategy for success in Iraq by allowing or asking the President to tell us, within 30 days after the enactment, what is his plan for success to bring the troops home.

Whether you voted for or against the war, or whether you are concerned about it, everyone has to be concerned about our troops that are there. The way this war has been waged is putting a huge strain on our men and women in uniform, and has become a threat to our armed forces' capacity to meet future needs. And if you take a look at what is happening with our military being spread through 120 countries, you will recognize that the administration's so-called ''strategy'' requires more troops to add on to the troops that are already in Iraq.

The problem that we are having is recruitment. We are not finding, notwithstanding the increases in bonuses up to $40,000, that we are getting the recruits that we need. We also find that they reduced the standards. One no longer has to be a high school graduate; they are now taking sub-high school graduates. And all the while, the President has still made no direct appeal to areas of this country, other than those where jobs and opportunity are lacking, to join the service and share in the sacrifices needed to defend this great republic.

So I am hoping if you are concerned about our troops, you will give us a chance to ask the President, how in the heck are we going to get out of this so that we can preserve our armed forces and stop taking advantage of the heroes who have served far more than their fair share?

LAYOFFS IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

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

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, my congressional office in Hickory, North Carolina, got news that Broyhill Industries, the big furniture company, would be cutting up to 1,009 jobs in Caldwell and Rutherford Counties. This is devastating to my people in my district. This is only one chapter in a long story of continuous layoffs in western North Carolina.

My district, North Carolina's 10th, is called by the Almanac of American Politics the most blue-collar district in America. But many of those blue-collar jobs are being lost. The textile industry has been devastated. The furniture industry, we have lost a lot of jobs there as well. Towns Lenoir and Rutherfordton are only the latest chapter in a long series of job losses in the region.

But I want my constituents to know, Mr. Speaker, that there is help, there is hope, and they can contact my congressional office.

In Congress we cannot keep companies from closing, but there are some things we can do, and we will act and do what is right for our people and do what is best for our country.

EXTENDING A WARM WELCOME TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FROM MAIN OPPOSITION PARTY IN ZIMBABWE

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome three women Members of Parliament from the main opposition party in Zimbabwe, the Movement for Democratic Change: the Honorable Thokozani Khupe, the Honorable Paurina Mpariwa, and the Honorable Priscilla Mishiairambwi.

In the face of continued repression, this Movement for Democratic Change is working tirelessly to realize democracy for Zimbabwe. The Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues is honored to host these leaders of Zimbabwe today.

All three women have a remarkable record of advocating passionately for the issues that affect women and society in Zimbabwe. It is a real pleasure to welcome leaders from other nations who are working to bring about peaceful democratic changes within their country, and I know my colleagues will join me in extending a warm welcome to them today.

U.N. REFORM

(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 debate the U.N. Reform Act, and I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Chairman HYDE) for making this a priority. We are trying to bring change to an organization that has grown fat, happy, and arrogant off of American taxpayer dollars.

Over the past several years, we have watched the oil-for-food scandal, and numerous scandals listed here on this poster, accounting errors, and then on top of this, in 2005, the U.N. asked for a $400 million budget increase.

Countries like Libya, Sudan, and Cuba are on the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and we, the taxpayers, are paying for this.

The United States sends more than $400 million a year to the U.N. We spend billions of dollars in direct aid and military aid, and no one can say we are not doing our fair share. Requiring the U.N. to try and find spending priorities is clearly not a bad thing; it is a good thing. Neither is asking them to cut spending. If they are not using our money wisely, we should not be sending as much.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the House will overwhelmingly support this important and overdue legislation.

REPUBLICANS SILENCE OPPOSITION TO PATRIOT ACT IN COMMITTEE HEARING

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, while we are on the subject of arrogance, as a new Member of the House Committee on the Judiciary, the Republican majority, I noticed, has become so arrogant that they are now attempting to silence even the opposition from the minority party, preventing us from giving any opposing testimony.

The latest abuse comes from the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary. As the committee prepares to vote on the reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act, Chairman SENSENBRENNER has conducted 12 hearings on the issue, but has refused to allow almost any testimony from those who oppose the PATRIOT Act or its provisions.

Opposing testimony was allowed only after the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) used the rules of the committee to force the chairman to hold a hearing that included Democratic panelists. Clearly miffed by this action, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Chairman SENSENBRENNER) scheduled the hearing for just 18 hours later on a Friday morning when the House was not even in session. And that is not the worst of it.

During the actual hearing, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Chairman SENSENBRENNER) rudely cut opposition voices off, and then abruptly and unilaterally concluded the hearing without a vote of the committee. After Democrats called a point of order, he gaveled the hearing to a close and left the room. When Democrats continued to voice their opposition, he turned the microphones off. When that did not stop them, he turned the lights off in the room.

Mr. Speaker, when are Republicans going to realize that the minority voice is an important one?