In 1994, CHARLIE NORWOOD was elected to represent the Tenth Congressional District of Georgia in the historic 104th Congress. We were classmates because that same year I was elected to represent the citizens of the Eighteenth Congressional District of Texas. CHARLIE represented his district so well that he was reelected by his constituents six times and always by substantial margins.

In Congress, CHARLIE NORWOOD was a strong proponent for health care reform. He introduced legislation calling for a Patient's Bill of Rights. He also championed more and better health care for veterans. In addition to his work in health care reform, NORWOOD introduced legislation and worked on various other public-policy issues.

Throughout his congressional career, CHARLIE NORWOOD served on the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Education and Workforce Committee. He was Vice Chairman of the Subcommittee on Health from 2001 to 2004 and a member of the Energy and Power Subcommittee from 1997 to 2000.

Mr. Speaker, a dear colleague has fallen but he will not be forgotten. We are all saddened by our loss but we are happy to have served with him. Our prayers and condolences are with his family and loved ones. CHARLIE NORWOOD—Vietnam Veteran, dentist, small business owner, and Member of Congress—was a good representative, a good legislator, and a good man. He will be missed.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time has expired.

Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the resolution.

There was no objection.

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

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under clause 5(d) of rule XX, it is the Chair's duty to announce to the House that, in light of the death of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), the whole number of the House is 434.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution just adopted.

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

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a joint resolution of the House of the following title:

H.J. Res. 20. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2007, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 106–286, the Chair, on behalf of the President of the Senate, and after consultation with the Majority Leader, appoints the following Members to serve on the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China:

The Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS).

The Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

The Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN).

The Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN), Co-Chairman.

The Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN).

IRAQ WAR RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3 of House Resolution 157, proceedings will now resume on the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 63) disapproving of the decision of the President announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed earlier today, 4 hours and 46 minutes of debate remained on the concurrent resolution.

The gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) has 2 hours and 21 minutes remaining and the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING) has 2 hours and 25 minutes remaining.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself so much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in a long war on radical Islam, a war the President has analogized to the Cold War. Two roads in that war lead to disaster. The first disastrous road would be to abandon the battle, appease, disarm, blame America, and speak to Syria and Iran about what concessions we are going to give them.

The second disastrous course is to stay the course in our utter fixation on Iraq as the only battlefield in the global war on radical Islam. Those who propose that we stay the course, an erroneous course, I might add, give four different reasons:

First, they say that if we do not stay in Iraq and prevail, then terrorists will have a place to gather and plot against us. Mr. Speaker, terrorists can plot against us in the deserts of Somalia. Terrorists are plotting against us in the mountains of North Waziristan, in the mountains of Pakistan. Mr. Speaker, terrorists can plot against us in an apartment building in Hamburg. Even if we prevail in Iraq, terrorists will always be able to find a conference room.

The second reason we are given is that if we do not prevail in Iraq, the terrorists there will follow us home. Well, keep in mind on 9/11, the vast majority of the hijackers came from Saudi Arabia, a country with an apparently stable and obstensibly friendly government. So even if Iraq were stable and friendly, individual Iraqi terrorists might well come to the United States and carry out actions against us. Third, we are told that we have an obligation to the Iraqi people to stay there, to stay the course. We have liberated the Iraqis from Saddam Hussein, a man who killed millions in his war against Iran and against the Kurds. Now we have given the Iraqi people an opportunity to come together. We have bled sufficiently for Iraq.

Finally, we are told that we owe it to those Americans who died in battle to stay in Iraq until Iraq is a model democracy.

□ 1750

I would argue that instead we owe it to those who died to have an intelligent foreign policy that safeguards America. That starts with learning the lessons of the Cold War. Remember the 1960s and the 1970s, when we were told that if we didn't support every escalation in Vietnam, then the Communists would follow us home or, in the parlance of that day, there would be Communists on the beaches of southern California.

Well, we won the Cold War because we pulled out of Vietnam. The short-term outcome in Vietnam was not what we would have liked, but even if we had stayed in Vietnam another decade, it would have been no different. We won the global war on communism because we waged it globally, and we did not become fixated forever on Vietnam.

The time has arrived to pull back from daily battles on the streets of Baghdad. It is time for Iraq to no longer be viewed as the sole or exclusive battlefield in the war on terrorism. It is time instead for us to focus on the one part of the global war on terrorism that could lead to hundreds of thousands of American deaths, and that is Iran's nuclear program. We need to mobilize all of our diplomatic leverage to reshape our policies towards Russia, Europe and China, toward the single goal of putting together a coalition that will put the pressure on Iran necessary to force that country to abandon its nuclear program. We owe this to those who have died in Iraq, and we owe it to the American people.

Finally, we are told that this resolution is nonbinding, meaningless, that the President will ignore it, that the only way we have of affecting policy is to cut off funds, which is constitutionally problematic, since it involves tying in the hands of the Commander in Chief while we have troops in the field. But the very people who say this resolution is meaningless have it in their power to make it meaningful, have it in their power to avoid such constitutionally problematic approaches.

Because if the Republicans will vote for this resolution, they will make it

meaningful, they will make it decisive, the President will not ignore it, we will jolt the President into abandoning his stay the course, escalate the course approach.

Those who vote against this resolution may keep it from being meaningful. But if even a third of the Republican caucus votes for this resolution, then the President will no longer stay the course, he will be jolted, he will work with Congress cooperatively towards a foreign policy that makes sense for our country.

I look forward to having enough votes for this resolution so that it is, indeed, meaningful.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized as the designee of the minority leader under the rule for the purpose of yielding time.

The gentleman is recognized.

Mr. KING of New York. I thank the Speaker for his recognition and for his usual courtesy.

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

I rise today in opposition to the resolution. I have listened as carefully as I can for the past day and a half of debate, and it becomes clearer and clearer to me that those who were supporting this resolution, for whatever reason, are unwilling to accept the consequences of the words of this resolution, unwilling to accept the consequences of what could happen by the adoption of this resolution.

Yes, the resolution is meaningless. Yes, the resolution has no legal impact, but it does send a terrible message. It sends a terrible message to the world that the United States is losing a sense of resolution, if you will. It also sends a very cruel message, I believe, to the troops in the field, because while the resolution goes out of the way to say it supports the troops, at the very same time it is necessarily undermining the newly appointed commander of those troops. We hear from speaker after speaker who was speaking in support of the resolution that this is more of the same staying the course, this is a policy that cannot work.

But yet the newly designated commander, General Petraeus, who was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate, is one of the architects of this policy. General Petraeus has stated that this policy can work, that he believes it will work.

Those of us who have been to Iraq and seen the outstanding work that General Petraeus has done, the 101st Airborne, we realize how committed he is. To me it sends such a mixed message to, on the one hand, have him unanimously confirmed as the new commander in the field, and yet at the same time to be attacking his credibility or his competency.

You can't have it both ways. You can't say he is the best man for the job, we have faith in him, and yet say the policy is wrong and it cannot work, and he says it will work and he is the architect of that policy. Think of the message we are sending to the troops. Think of the message we are sending to our allies in our region. Probably most importantly, think of the message we are sending to the enemy of the region.

I just heard the previous gentleman say that those of us who oppose the resolution want to stay the course. I would say that those who are supporting the resolution are the ones who want to stay the course. This is a significant new policy. General Petraeus has said it is a new policy, and it is a new policy.

The gentleman also said that we don't really have to worry about Iraq becoming a haven for terrorists because terrorists can attack us anywhere. He basically said you can do it from an apartment in Hamburg.

I would suggest that if the proponents of the resolution cannot appreciate the distinction between a hotel room in Hamburg and a sovereign state such as Iraq being occupied by terrorists, then they don't realize the impact that Afghanistan had, the fact that the Taliban allowed al Qaeda to have a sanctuary in Afghanistan, how it gave them a strong base of operations to carry out and plot the attacks of September 11.

Now, truly there are terrorists everywhere, Islamist terrorists throughout the world. They are certainly throughout the Middle East, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, they are here in the United States, we know that, in Canada. But the fact is you try to take as many sanctuaries away from them if possible.

Iraq, if we did leave Iraq, and that, I believe, has to be the necessary outcome, the only logical conclusion of where this resolution will ultimately lead us, then we have a situation where we are talking about confronting Iran. Well, the Shiites in Iran will certainly have enormous influence in Iraq. Al Qaeda will have a sanctuary among the Sunnis in Iraq, and then we will have the situation in the north between the Kurds and the Turks. So the fact is no one more than those of us who oppose the resolution realize this is not the only battlefield, but it is a main battlefield.

Certainly al Qaeda believes it is important. That is why we have al Qaeda in Iraq. That is why al Qaeda has been carrying out attacks, that is why al Qaeda was there. That is why we are engaging in Anbar province. By the way, of the 21,000 additional troops, at least 4,000 will be directly confronting al Qaeda in Anbar province.

These are all the issues I feel have not been in any way adequately or sufficiently addressed by the supporters of the resolution. Again, at a time when we have General Petraeus embarking on what I believe is a key turning point in the war, it is really irresponsible to even be considering voting for this resolution.

Now, another point, I know many speakers on my side want to be heard during the time that I will be controlling, but we, I think, have to address the issue of should Congress be getting involved in making strategic battlefield decisions.

I have researched this. I have not found one instance during the history of our country where the United States Congress has injected itself into battlefield decisions.

I was just thinking suppose we did this during World War II, and we had this situation with a small island in the Pacific, Iwo Jima, where almost 7,000 people were killed in less than 6 weeks, almost 26,000 casualties. If we had 24-hour cable news, if we had a sense of disunity in the country, we would be bringing a resolution in the second or third week of the battle saying we already lost 2, 3, 4,000 troops, this one island, how can we have 10 to 15,000 casualties just in the first 2, 3 weeks.

But the fact is we have allowed the President, as Commander in Chief, and that is his constitutional responsibility. We voted for the war in the House. We voted for the war in the Senate. Once we do that, the Commander in Chief, I believe, strongly believe, has the constitutional authority and the right to be deciding exactly the tactical and strategic decisions.

If the Members of Congress want to cut off funding for the war, the fact is some of them may, then the fact is they should say that, not be coming in through the backdoor.

So I would urge my colleagues to realize the consequences of their action. You know, I spoke on the House floor yesterday, and after I was finished the speaker who followed me said I wish that the opponents of the resolution would just stick to the resolution itself.

I am more than willing to debate the resolution. I believe I have. The fact is I can see why they don't want to look at the consequences beyond the narrow language of that resolution, because it will have horrific consequences for the United States. Actions have consequences, words have consequences, and the words of this resolution will have terrible consequences for the United States, terrible consequences for all of us who oppose Islamic terrorism, and terrible consequences for our allies in the region and with whom we need support in the future.

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

□ 1800

Mr. SHERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am proud to be part of a process that shows our troops that America is a functioning democracy, and that we are engaged in discussing a resolution that reflects the views of the vast majority of the American people.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, a distinguished Member

of the Congress and of the Appropriations Committee, the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. KILPATRICK).

(Ms. KILPATRICK asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KILPATRICK. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

I stand here today in support of House Resolution 63, a long time coming, but as it is always said, it is right on time. I stand here to speak for the millions of Americans today who have had enough, who have had enough of this war, its unjust nature, its over $500 billion that has been spent there in Iraq and Afghanistan and not spent in our own country.

I stand here today in support of H. Con. Res. 63 because this war has lasted longer than World War II. My 87-year-old father fought in the Navy at Pearl Harbor during World War II. One of my political mentors, a great man, Mayor Coleman Alexander Young, a former Tuskeegee Airman, fought during World War II. It is time to bring our troops home. It is time for us to change the course.

As we celebrate this Black History Month, the theme of the Congressional Black Caucus during these times are change course, do something different, act, speak, donate, join, confront the crisis, the crisis of the war which is why we are here today, and then continue the legacy that has brought this country to greatness.

Many of my Congressional Black Caucus members have served in the military. JOHN CONYERS, CHARLIE RANGEL, ED TOWNS, BOBBY SCOTT, WILLIAM JEFFERSON, SANFORD BISHOP, all able men who have fought and served in our military over the years.

We come to you, tonight, this evening, as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, proud Americans. We love our country. We serve our people. And we want to remain the strongest Nation in the world.

Who speaks for the American people in this time of crisis? They spoke to us last November when they said enough is enough. The first military man who died in wars for our country's independence was Crispus Attucks, who fought in the Revolutionary War, an African American man who gave his life because he loved this country, could not vote at the time, could not own property, but again he fought in a war because, again, this was the greatest country in the world.

So what do we do today as we discuss H. Con. Res. 63? It is time to engage in a diplomatic solution. We cannot win this war militarily. The generals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have spoken out against the escalation. What is the plan, Mr. President? How do we bring our soldiers home, redeploy them on the periphery, and make our country safe, and, at the same time, invest those dollars in Americans' lives, in their children's lives?

Dr. King wrote a book, ''I Have the Strength.'' I have the strength to stand before you today for the American people. I have the strength to let you know that we as a Nation can be all that God wants us to be. That in fighting wars, and wars will come from time to time, this is the time to bring this one to the end.

I will protect and speak out for the over 3,100 families who have lost young men and women, over the tens of thousands who are blinded and amputees, and over the many hundred thousands we do not yet know who will be in need of mental health services as our mental health capacity in this country has been shredded.

Those dollars have to be invested so that we take care of our veterans. I have the strength to stand here before you this evening because it is time, as we debate H. Con. Res. 63, that we rise up as a Nation and speak out and continue our legislative responsibilities, as I stood before you, took my oath of office that I would protect this country, our Constitution, against both domestic and foreign intimidation.

I stand before you tonight as one of 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus during this African American History Month, who love our country, who want us to invest in America's families. H. Con. Res. 63 will begin that discussion. It will make it available that we might change course, do something different, listen to the American people.

We love our troops. We served in those troops. Our families served. We want the strongest military that we have available. We are now having in Iraq equipment shortages. If we spent over $503 billion, why is it that equipment is not adequate for our soldiers to engage in battle?

Accountability. The Inspector General recently reported $9 billion is unaccounted for. That is $9 billion as part of the $500 billion that could be invested in American families. So I say as I stand here, H. Con. Res. 63, vote ''yes.'' Let's change course.

I am honored and blessed with the understanding of a power greater than that of any singular or even collective Membership of this Congress. That power has allowed Congress to finally debate the most pressing question of our time—the War in Iraq. As I prepared myself to speak in support of H. Con. Res. 63, a very simple and very clear declaration that Congress supports our troops, but we oppose the escalation of this war, I reflected upon the words of one of the greatest warriors for peace this world has ever known, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A prolific author, Dr. King wrote a book entitled, ''Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?'' In it, Dr. King writes that ''we are faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity.'' Congress lost our opportunity for real debate on this war a little more than four years ago. Congress has that opportunity now.

As this is the height of Black History Month, I also speak to America today because of the investment that my ancestor put through 4 centuries of slave labor, 4 centuries of lynchings, 4 centuries of Jim Crow laws, 4 centuries of sitting on the back of the bus, 4 centuries of combined discrimination. And despite 4 centuries of second class citizenship, African Americans have always heeded the call to arms in defense of a country that did not always defend them.

Indeed, when it comes to war, the very first person, black, white, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American to die for this country was an African American, Crispus Attucks, who did not even have the right to vote, the right to buy property, the right to be recognized as a human being. He wanted the right to love our country. Like the hundreds of thousands of African Americans who have followed his footsteps in the military, I honor and I appreciate the service of all our women and men in the military of all ethnicities. I support all of the women and men who serve, without glory but with honor, efficiently and effectively protecting all of us, never hesitating to pay the highest price any human being could pay for our freedom.

I speak to America today because Americans have had enough, as best selling author Frank Rich illustrates, of the ''decline and fall of the truth.'' Of what decline and fall do I speak? Of ''Mission accomplished.'' Of ''bring 'em on.'' Of ''shock and awe.'' Of ''dead or alive.'' Of ''uranium coming from Africa.'' Of ''smoking guns becoming mushroom clouds.'' Those Americans who have had enough are not just the Democratic majority. They are not just the senior citizens, the working class women and men who punch a time clock every day, or the liberals of America. They conservatives, my Republican colleagues in Congress and elsewhere, people in the red States and blue States, business owners, military women and men and their families.

My father served this country honorably as a member of our military, as have many of my relatives. Many members of the Congressional Black Caucus have also served this country in our military. Just off of the top of my head, my colleagues Chairman JOHN CONYERS, Chairman CHARLES RANGEL, Congressman ED TOWNS, and Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, among others, have worn the uniform. My political mentor and hero, the late, great mayor of Detroit, Michigan, Coleman Young, was one of General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.'s understudies as a Tuskeegee Airman as a bombardier and navigator. During the Vietnam war, African Americans served despite the opposition of Dr. King and other groups opposed to the Vietnam war. They did it for the same reason why I serve this country as a Member of Congress—because I love our country.

The investment that began when African Americans set foot in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 and continues to this very day is the reason why I stand in support of this resolution that is but the first step, to resolve the challenge that is Iraq. I am not a military expert, and I don't pretend to be a military expert. But, as noted genius Albert Einstein once said, ''insanity is doing the same over and over again and expecting different results.'' Over and over, Congress has spent over $503 billion in Iraq. Over and over, America's finest have died, with more than 3,000 women and men, in Iraq. Over and over, women and men are wounded or maimed, some for life, with more than 25,000 today. Today, we still cannot safely fly planes on a reliable basis in and out of Baghdad. This is progress?

Progress is what Americans want. I know that war can be messy, amorphous at times, and brutal. After a war that has lasted more than the United States involvement in World War II, our military women and men deserve progress. Our taxpayers deserve progress. Our current course, and this surge, is not what Americans want, this is not what Congress wants, this is not what I want.

Historians have generally acknowledged that the debate on the war in 1991 was one of the high marks of this institution. Congress did not cede its role then to a popular President. Instead, Congress and the White House worked together to achieve a worthwhile goal. It was difficult. Both sides had to compromise. But guess what? That is how a democracy works.

Unfortunately, Congress did not have this debate over 4 years ago in a war that has now lasted longer than the United States was involved in World War II. Thank God, we have that debate now. Thank God, we have heard the voice of the American people. Thank God and the American people, it is time for a change.

After this debate, after this resolution, I hope that this is the beginning of our country, and our world, to begin to choose between chaos and community. As Dr. King once wrote, ''we have a choice today—nonviolent coexistence or violent co annihilation.''

Dr. King wrote another book entitled ''Strength to Love.'' It is because I have the strength to love my country, the strength to love our troops, the strength to love the oath I took for this office—that I will protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, against all enemies, foreign and domestic—that I have the strength to support this resolution. We need to be smarter about our policy in Iraq to include diplomatic and political solutions rather than repeating the same military policies that have not worked, but continue to put the finest of our women and men in harm's way. Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, working together, can arrive at a solution that establishes a stable democracy in Iraq, protects American interests, and increases the role and responsibility of the Iraqi people to fend for themselves.

Instead of ''bring them on,'' I hope that my colleagues agree that Congress can start to ''bring them home.'' I will vote in strong support of H. Con. Res. 63, and hope that Congress can quickly work to bring stronger, binding legislation to the floor soon.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY).

Mr. TERRY. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to H. Con. Res 63. Our troops have made tremendous sacrifices in waging war against Islamic extremists who not only want to deny freedom to their fellow countrymen but remain committed to attacking America and our way of life.

We have lost some of the bravest, most dedicated and committed Americans we have been honored to know, love, and mourn. They deserve the highest honor and respect from this Congress and the American people for their service. Those brave men and women still in harm's way have earned the right to come home as quickly as possible.

This does not mean, however, that we should abandon this mission and leave Iraq to certain failure by prematurely pulling out our troops, nor should we cut military funding or adopt nonbinding resolutions that embolden our enemies and undermine our troop morale.

Now, that last statement has been accused by many speakers on the Democrat side as being a red herring to chase the American public away from the attention of this addition of 20,000 troops. But I read their authored resolution. And the words are that you support and protect members of the Armed Services who are serving, are serving or have served, which means that they will not support our troops, any uniformed member that is newly sent to Iraq, whether it is for training the Iraqi troops, whether to be embedded and help them, or any capacity. So the next logical step from their own wording of this resolution is to cut funding. That is the only way to stop supporting any new military member that goes to Iraq.

So we have to ask, how will they do that? Now, I believe the Iraqi Government needs our assistance to restore security and prevent a descent into anarchy and civil war, or, worse yet, a heightened foreign insurgency that results in terrorist control of that nation.

The situation in the Middle East is a powder keg that will explode if the United States abandons it. The resolution under debate today offers no military or diplomatic solutions apart from expressing disapproval over the plan to increase troops that will help train the Iraqis to go to the front and take more responsibilities to securing Iraq.

The U.S. military personnel will be working closely with and training Iraqi soldiers. Pentagon leaders tell us that embedding these highly trained U.S. troops have been highly effective in making the Iraqi military better.

In anticipation of the American withdrawal, 23 Sunni clerics in Saudi Arabia have already expressed support for sending their Sunni fighters to Iraq as have Shiite clerics from other areas of the Middle East in anticipation of the U.S. leaving Iraq.

□ 1810

The Jordanian ambassador has described it well, saying that it is like the U.S. has stepped on a land mine, only that this is the other type of a land mine that will explode when you take your foot off of it. We will see an explosion if we do as this Democrat resolution sets up and stop supporting our troops and begin withdrawing them.

This Congress must not repeat the mistakes of Vietnam. War should not be conducted by 535 self-proclaimed generals. Politicians should not be dictating troop levels or planning missions. Our duty is to conduct effective and responsible oversight while giving our soldiers and military commanders the resources that they need to get the job done. This resolution specifically says you will not do that.

Premature withdrawal or a forced gradual withdrawal, which this resolution seems to endorse, from Iraq, through cutting funds, may appease those who oppose the war, the base of the authors who wrote this resolution, but it surely will produce more bloodshed and sectarian violence far exceeding the level currently reported by newspapers today.

I am not willing to gamble with those lives of future Americans of our generations to come. This resolution runs away from the best option we have been presented to provide security in Iraq. I am open to alternatives, better plans, including those from our colleagues on the other side. It is just that we are not able to engage in that discussion today.

I will vote ''no'' on this resolution, and hope that the majority of my colleagues will join me.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I gladly yield 5 minutes to my distinguished colleague from Louisiana (Mr. JEFFERSON).

Mr. JEFFERSON. Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to address an issue of grave importance to our country. I rise in support of the resolution that is before us. The resolution continues to support our troops who are presently fighting in Iraq. But it calls into severe question the wisdom of escalating our military involvement there.

I personally believe that escalating our efforts in Iraq is a tremendous mistake. It is time for us to recognize that there is no military solution to what is happening there. The only solution that will work in Iraq is a political solution. Even those who believe this surge to be an excellent strategy do so because they hope that it will lead to more favorable conditions for a political settlement.

The political solution depends on the Iraqi people themselves deciding to work together to knit their country together and to fight in behalf of their own nascent democracy. The rampant violence in Iraq is the result of a civil conflict in that country, and the Iraqi people must decide whether they will truly have a real representative democracy that includes the Sunnis, the Shiites, and other significant segments of their society.

If the Iraqi Government is to stand up for its own future, we must begin now to make it clear that we will not stay there forever and continue to add our troops. I personally believe that the best way to signal that our commitment is not open ended in this civil war is to start now the withdrawal of some of our troops. However, short of that, this resolution is an important first step toward ensuring that the people of our Nation know that we are changing direction in Iraq, and so that the people of Iraq will know that they must plan a future with the United

States as an important ally, but not as an enforcer of the status quo in their nation.

Madam Speaker, the justifications for the invasion of Iraq have long ago been discredited. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There was no nuclear threat. Every credible source and study has established that there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda and the tragic events of 9/11. These were the reasons that were given as justification for our entry into the Iraqi war and that supported the statement that our national interest was at stake. Unfortunately, since the reasons were erroneous, no national interest exists.

Winning a military conflict, even if it were possible, does not create a national interest. Adding more troops to fight under the present conditions on the ground in Iraq cannot create a national interest where none truly exists. Such a strategy will simply add more human targets in a civil war that does not threaten America.

We are straining our troops and our military and financial resources beyond all reasonable limits. We are decimating our National Guard strength at a time when we have more than enough disasters here at home to which we must attend.

At a time when Louisiana needs the support of our National Guard, members of our National Guard are being called to serve in Iraq. At a time when the New Orleans area residents struggle to rebuild following the worst natural disaster in our Nation's history, and following deadly tornadoes just 2 days ago, we need National Guard troops here at home to fight crime in our streets and to keep our people safe. We need the billions of dollars that we are spending on war and the rebuilding of Iraq to wage a war on poverty and ignorance here at home. We need a greater commitment to rebuilding the Gulf Coast communities, including my beloved City of New Orleans.

Madam Speaker, let's not continue to make matters worse at home and abroad by pursuing a policy in Iraq that cannot work, that has not worked and that simply can no longer be justified.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution which supports our troops in the field and supports, at the same time, the commonsense objections to escalating our troop presence in Iraq. The people of this great country eloquently expressed their disapproval of the course of this war in the November elections, and on their behalf we should do no less.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS), who is a member of the Armed Services Committee and the Homeland Security Committee.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose this resolution. In doing so, I want to say I understand and share in some of the frustrations of those who are disappointed in the course of this conflict.

Over the past few days we have heard passionate debate on both sides of the issue from Democrats and Republicans alike. But I would say to my colleagues, passing this resolution is not the answer to their frustration. Not only is it purely symbolic and offers no productive solution for helping our military succeed, it sends the wrong message to our troops.

Instead of debating a resolution that says what we should not do in Iraq, it seems to me a more reasonable question should be, how should we go forward from here?

In January, the President put forth a plan to send reinforcements to help secure key areas in and around Baghdad and Anbar province in order to achieve a level of security to allow the Iraqi Government and security forces to assume control. As we all know, it may work and it may not.

But if the President, as Commander in Chief, and General Pace truly believe this plan will succeed, then I believe it should be given a chance to work.

Having listened to proponents and critics of the plan, it seems to me its success or failure is dependent on some key factors, including, first, whether our soldiers will be given the latitude to fully perform their duties without political interference; secondly, whether the Iraqi Government will be held accountable to live up to its commitments; and, third, whether the Iraqis will finally take responsibility for their own affairs.

Madam Speaker, the stakes in this debate are high. Iraq, indeed, is now the primary battlefront in the global war on terror, and there are no easy answers.

The House may pass this resolution this week, but in doing so, we will have missed an opportunity for a better and more balanced debate, including the chance to vote on a substitute bill.

Given the sacrifices our Nation has made, I agree the time to see real progress in Iraq is now. We all want our troops to come home safely and as soon as possible. But we also need for them to be successful in order for our Nation to remain secure.

Though our patience is being tested, our men and women in uniform deserve better from us than this purely symbolic resolution. They need our complete and unqualified support.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentlelady from the U.S. Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN), who currently is the chairlady of our Subcommittee on Insular Affairs of the House Resources Committee. She also serves as a member of the Homeland Security Committee.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor of this House today wearing my American Legion auxiliary pin, as I do every day, to honor the men and women of our Armed Forces who have served and continue to give the highest service to this country even today in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the world.

And I rise as a proud American and the representative of the more than 120,000 people of the United States Virgin Islands who love this country and desire nothing more than it be the strongest and best it can be in support of House Concurrent Resolution 63, which expresses our strong support for the members of the U.S. Armed Forces for their honorable and brave service in Iraq, but just as forcefully and clearly states our disapproval of the decision of the President to deploy the over 20,000 additional troops.

□ 1820

I don't take this position lightly, as we currently have over 100 members of the Virgin Islands National Guard serving in that theater today, and having recently lost two members of the Guard as well as four other soldiers who preceded them.

However, Madam Speaker, as the sole Representative of the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Congress, Americans who have fought and died in every war and conflict from the Revolutionary War to this and yet cannot vote for the Commander in Chief, I consider it my solemn duty to express their views on this, the most pressing and important issue facing our country.

Madam Speaker, our fellow Americans spoke loud and clear last November, expressing a desire for a change of direction in Iraq, and by a more than 2-to-1 margin, they presently oppose the President's plan.

It is important, Madam Speaker, that we engage in this important debate today. The American people are demanding that we do so. Far from second-guessing the President's strategy and undermining our troops, as the White House charges, we are fulfilling our constitutional role and doing the responsible thing. The last 4 years have demonstrated that the present course in Iraq is not the correct one, and it is time that we demand that the President listen to other experienced experts and responsible voices that are calling for another approach.

This modest resolution is but the first step in that effort, an effort to support our troops and support our Nation by holding the President and the Department of Defense accountable, by insisting on an exit strategy that extricates our men and women from what is now a civil war, and allows the Iraqi people and their government to take responsibility for their country's welfare.

We are also told by Members on the other side of the aisle, Madam Speaker, that if we change course in Iraq, it will be disastrous for the Iraqi people. But the Iraqis themselves don't think so. Not only do polls show that 78 percent of Iraqis believe that American troops

provoked more violence than they prevented and that nearly three-quarters of Baghdad residents would feel safer if American forces left Iraq, but previous surges have indeed resulted in an escalation of violence, killing greater numbers of Americans as well as Iraqis.

Instead of beating the drums of war, the President should be engaging in diplomacy, as the Iraqi Study Group called for, to pursue our common interest in a stable Iraq, even if it means sitting down with Syria and Iran, as we have done in the past. Peace and the lives of our men and women deserve this effort.

With all of the thousands of Iraqis killed and over 3,100 of our troops having made the ultimate sacrifice, we have paid a far greater price for the decision to invade Iraq without the proper justification or an exit strategy and without adequate preparation, training, and protection for our troops. We have further paid the price of the loss of respect and esteem by the international community and the loss by the people of this country of any confidence that what we are told by the White House is the truth.

While we, sadly, cannot bring back those who have died, we can honor their memory by restoring truth and restoring this country to the high respect, regard, and leadership that the brave men and women of our Armed Forces dedicate and sacrifice their lives to preserve.

House Concurrent Resolution 63 begins that restoration and repair. I urge my colleagues to adopt this resolution.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I would remind the supporters of the resolution that more than 70 percent of the American people, in opinion polls, opposed President Truman's policy in Korea, and that was one of the turning points in the Cold War.

Madam Speaker, I yield 6⅛ minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER), who is a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel and a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.

Mr. WICKER. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

Madam Speaker, on December 31, 1776, with the fate of the Revolution in doubt, General George Washington faced a challenge of convincing his soldiers to stay in the fight. With their enlistments over, they wanted to go home. Washington made an impassioned plea and even offered volunteers a bonus. But no one responded. He spoke again, saying that all they held dear was at stake. And finally one man stepped forward. Then others followed.

Public opinion at that time was not on Washington's side. Only a third of the population supported the war for independence. One-third were openly hostile, and another one-third simply did not want to be involved.

We should be grateful that George Washington was not obsessed with public opinion polls.

Only days earlier Thomas Paine had written: ''These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered.''

In the summer of 1863, Colonel Joshua Chamberlain of Maine faced a similar crisis. He had to convince a group of mutineers to stand and fight in a key battle. He promised to plead their case later if they rejoined the ranks. They did, and helped him win the Battle of Gettysburg.

Public opinion at that time was running against President Lincoln and the war. It was lasting longer and costing more than anticipated. In Congress, Democrats demanded the troops be brought home immediately, but Lincoln stood by his convictions and won the war.

It is easy for us to look back on these pivotal moments in our Nation's history without remembering how tough the going was, how reluctant many of our own people were, and how it took strong leadership to bring about victory.

Let's contrast those times with the situation today in Iraq. Clearly the American people are tired and impatient with this war, and many believe we cannot win. Yet troop morale is high. In testimony before Congress last week, the senior enlisted personnel from each service, the National Guard, and the Reserves, said our forces in Iraq believe in what they are doing and that positive things are being accomplished.

But you don't have to take their word for it. The enlistment and reenlistment figures themselves are a testimony to the commitment of our troops. All service branches met and exceeded their goals in both categories in 2006. The command sergeant major of the Marine Corps told our committee that young people join the Marines today to get to the fight. Knowing full well they will go to Iraq, they are signing up with enthusiasm and purpose. It almost takes your breath away to hear the troops who have been there say they continue to believe in our mission and want to see it through to completion.

I hear the same thing from my constituents who have returned from Iraq. They express frustration about the news media's focus on the bad news. Returning troops tell of their successes in helping steer Iraq toward a path of democracy and freedom.

I received an e-mail this week from a Mississippi soldier in Iraq. He said, ''No one wants everybody home more than I do, but we must finish the job. We are doing good things here and taking bad guys out of the game.''

The most important question in today's debate is what message does this resolution send to our military, to the volunteers who have been serving so proudly in harm's way? And make no mistake, they are listening to what we say here and watching what we do here. Will the passage of this resolution give our troops encouragement? I don't think so.

The Americans are conflicted about this war. A CBS poll this week showed that only 44 percent of Americans support this resolution; 45 percent are opposed. That is all the more reason for leaders to lead. Washington and Lincoln were not concerned about public opinion polls. They did what was necessary to succeed, and that is what is called for in the halls of Congress today.

I am convinced that deep in their hearts, most Americans realize we are in a serious global war for survival against an enemy that wants to wipe us off the face of the Earth. When all is said and done, the American people want us to win this war. Success in Iraq is a key element in winning against the terrorists.

Osama bin Laden's chief deputy has urged al Qaeda operatives in Iraq to expel the Americans, extend the ''jihad wave'' to neighboring countries, and 2 weeks ago he spoke of Afghanistan and Iraq as two ''most crucial fields.'' I regret to say that enemies like these will be pleased when this resolution passes.

Madam Speaker, let's send the terrorists a message of strength and resolve. Let's send a message of support and unity and confidence and appreciation to our troops. This resolution sends the wrong message, and I will vote against it.

□ 1830

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to my distinguished friend and colleague, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. WYNN), currently serving as chairman of the Subcommittee on Environmental and Hazardous Materials of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. WYNN. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 63, a bipartisan resolution supporting our troops in Iraq, while opposing the President's troop escalation strategy.

This marks the fourth year of this war. It is time to bring our troops home now. We have not quelled the violence. We have not thwarted al Qaeda. We have not stabilized the region. We have not deterred terrorist radicals. In fact, because of our presence, there are more jihadists in Iraq than there were before.

Thus, I find it inconceivable that the President's response to this situation, 3 years of military failure in Iraq, is to suggest that we add more troops, 20,000 additional troops.

Since the start of the war in 2003, over 3,000 U.S. troops have died, more than 50 from my State of Maryland alone. In addition, 23,000 American soldiers have suffered serious injury and will have post-traumatic consequences.

The President's approach will only result in the loss of more U.S. lives.

Iraq is in the midst of what has become a civil war between Shia and Sunni. There also is internal tribal and gang violence. Our troops can play no constructive role in this environment, except as targets for all sides.

This is not a partisan Democratic issue. Let me be clear. The President's proposed troop escalation runs contrary to the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group and military experts such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to a December Washington Post article, the Joint Chiefs have long opposed the increase in troops.

Generals Colin Powell, George Casey, John Abizaid and Barry McCaffrey have all expressed skepticism about the President's surge strategy. Even some of my Republican colleagues will oppose this surge strategy, and for good reason.

Troop buildups in Iraq haven't worked. U.S. troop levels increased by 18,000 from November 2004 to January 2005 in advance of the Iraqi elections, yet insurgent attacks increased. In 2005, the administration increased troop levels by over 20,000 to secure Iraq ahead of its constitutional referendum. The strategy not only failed to quell the violence, but insurgent attacks increased by 29 percent.

Some of my Republican colleagues make an argument that if you support the troops, you must support the mission. They say if we don't defeat radical Islam in Iraq, then where will we do it? Unfortunately, both of these theories are flawed.

Our troops have performed admirably, sacrificing life and limb, often without sound strategy or adequate equipment. And, yes, the goal of peace and stability in the Middle East is admirable, but this mission is misguided. The fact is that despite previous congressional support, this mission was inadequately planned and our troops inadequate equipped. In addition, the administration has cast a blind eye at massive fraud, waste and abuse that has undermined the reconstruction efforts and cheated the American taxpayer.

We are now in the midst of a civil war that we neither understand nor can we resolve. I support the troops, but I cannot support this ill-conceived mission.

As hard as it is for some, we must understand that this is not a World War II type conflict. This is not our great army defeating their great army.

We cannot defeat a radical Islamic insurgency militarily. This does not mean we cannot defeat a radical Islamic insurgency. It does not mean that if we oppose a troop escalation or begin withdrawing our troops that we have failed. Rather, it is a recognition of what the American people already know: We need a new strategy.

This administration operates under the arrogant assumption that only America wants peace in Iraq. In fact, other Arab nations in the region have an even greater desire for peace and stability. They don't want to see their brethren killed. They don't want to see waves of refugees flood their region. Our new strategy should be a diplomatic initiative to bring countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran and Syria to the table to engage in finding solutions.

Now, I know the war hawks will say diplomatic approaches cannot work. But think about it. It wasn't too long ago that this administration and these war hawks were saying that North Korea was an intractable enemy. Yet today, through diplomatic efforts, we are making appreciable progress. I believe this diplomatic approach can work in Iraq.

We need a dramatic change in strategy. We should begin with the withdrawal of U.S. troops and place more responsibility on the Iraqis to foster their own democracy. Most people, including General John Abizaid, understand that we cannot impose democracy on the Iraqis if they don't want it for themselves. That is why I support the End the War in Iraq Act, which would use the congressional power of the purse to bring this war to an end if the administration cannot or will not do so.

But in addition to beginning a phased withdrawal of U.S. troops, we must pursue an aggressive diplomatic initiative to involve willing Muslim countries in creating a ceasefire first, a peace process second, and the rebuilding of Iraq in the third instance. These countries have a vested interest in promoting peace and stability in the region.

It was said many years ago war is not the answer, and today more war in the form of troop escalation is the absolutely wrong answer. I urge adoption of the resolution.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I remind supporters of the resolution that the newly confirmed commander in Iraq says this is new strategy and it will work, and he is the expert on counterinsurgency.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN), the ranking member of the Budget Committee.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Friends and colleagues, I am glad we are having this debate. It is good to debate the most important issue facing our country, the most important issue facing the world. I am glad we are talking about Iraq. We need to have a debate about Iraq.

I have grave concerns about the conduct of this war. I look back at the last 3 or 4 years and I think to myself, boy, I would have done that differently, I would have done this differently; they should have done that, they should have done this. I think we all can look at hindsight and see how things should have been done differently.

Well, here is where we are. The question is, is this the right resolution to pass? I for one don't know if this strategy is going to work or not. I believe our troops are going to do exactly what we ask them to do. I have perfect confidence that the U.S. soldiers, airmen, Army and Marines are going to do exactly what we ask them to do and they will do their jobs.

Where my doubts lie are with the Iraqi Government. Will the Iraqi Government do what we are asking them to do? Will the Iraqi Government do what is needed to do to hold up their end of the bargain? I don't know.

But what I do know is this: If we pass this resolution, this resolution, while our troops are in the middle of implementing this mission, while our troops are over there right now implementing this strategy, and we pass this resolution which says, you know what, we don't think you can succeed; we don't think you can do the job; we don't think you can do what you are being asked to do right now, that is a slap in the face. It is a killer of morale. This is the wrong message to send our troops.

We have to think about the alternatives. We have to think about the consequences of failure. We have to think about the message this sends our troops. We have to think about the message this sends our enemies.

Madam Speaker, by telling the world, by telling Americans and by telling our enemies and our troops we don't think this is going to work, we don't think this can succeed, what message does that send?

And for those who say this won't work and I am voting for this resolution, it is your obligation to tell us how better you can do this, what is your plan, what is your strategy. Because we have to think about the consequences of failure. We have to accept and know that if we just pull out we will have sectarian genocide. We will have a safe haven for terrorists with oil money. We will have a Middle East power struggle that will be very, very ugly, where countries that are very hostile to us, like Iran and Syria, will have the run of the region. We have to look at those consequences.

But more important than anything else, Madam Speaker, is the fact that I just cannot look our soldiers in the eyes, and I am traveling to this region in a few days, I cannot look them in the eyes and tell them that when I was in the comforts of Congress, I sat there high open my pedestal and I told the American people and you that the mission you are about to engage in, the job you are trying hard to do for us, you can't complete it. You are incapable. It won't work. Why bother trying? I can't send that message to our troops.

With that, Madam Speaker, I urge a ''no'' vote. This is the right debate to have, the wrong resolution to pass.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from the great State of Ohio (Mrs.

JONES), currently serving as the chairwoman of the Committee on Ethics and a distinguished member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

□ 1840

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 63. Today through this resolution, we reiterate our support for our troops, these brave men and women, who even when they did not have proper equipment and resources, continued to serve and protect this country. Today we pledge to offer them the same support they have so willingly given us throughout the conflict.

To date, 3,100 soldiers have given their lives in this war and over 20,000 have been injured. I often feel that we gloss over the numbers and forget that each one was an actual person. They were somebody's son, daughter, somebody's mother or father, somebody's brother or sister. They were real people, as real as 19-year-old PVT. Brandon Sloan and 1SG Robert Dowdy, who were the first soldiers from my congressional district to become casualties of this war.

There have been many others, including SGT Michael Wiggins, a graduate of Shaw High School in East Cleveland, killed on January 23; or Charles King, a man described by family and friends as a highly decorated, hardworking soldier, died October 14 of injuries sustained when an improvised device detonated near his vehicle; and Samuel Bowen, who was affectionately called ''Smokey'' and always had a great smile on his face. He was killed when a rocket-propelled grenade exploded near his vehicle.

At his funeral, Specialist Ronald Eaton, a soldier rescued by Bowen, said, Without regard to himself, without regard to the injuries he had sustained, Sam grabbed me and pulled me to safety.

All of these are special stories, but I will share a few more with you about Brandon Sloan and Robert Dowdy.

Brandon Sloan was a special young man who exhibited a unique blend of personality and strength, a loving child who played and enjoyed spending time with other children. Later he became a big brother to his sister Brittany, with whom he shared a close relationship.

He began his education in East Cleveland and remained in the district until his family moved to Euclid. While in East Cleveland, he developed a love for basketball and continued in various athletic pursuits.

In 1996, the family moved to Oakwood in the Bedford School District, and there Brandon became a Bearcat. He confessed his hope in Christ during his high school years and was baptized. Later, he pursued a career in the military where he subsequently gave his life.

MSG Robert Dowdy was a native of Cleveland, a member of the 507th Maintenance Company. He was a loving son and devoted husband, a distance runner, placed second in a 10-kilometer run in El Paso.

Why am I talking about all of these personal things? Because somehow in the course of this discussion, we have taken it away from being personal, about people. We stand here on the floor talking about a surge, or giving life and saying we are not supporting these troops. These families want their babies to come home and so do I.

This past weekend I spoke to the 112th Battalion of the Ohio National Guard. The battalion is the oldest and most decorated military organization in the State of Ohio, with lineage and honors dating back to and including World War I and World War II. These men and women have sacrificed greatly for this country, and now they are being asked to support the President's plan to send 20,000 more troops.

I simply cannot support it. You have heard all the things I said previously. This is not the way. We do not need to send any more Brandons or Robert Dowdys or Michael Kings or Sam Bowens over there to die.

We pledged to take this country in a new direction without regard to the war in Iraq, through greater accountability, oversight, and through stronger diplomatic and political initiatives.

At the services for the 25th Marine Regiment, a Band of Brothers, we lost some 12 young men from Brook Park, and I said to them in my closing words, because these are the words I think these young men are saying to us:

''Please celebrate my life, please have no regrets; we did not spend all the time we wanted, yet the time we had was well spent. We did not reach every rung of that ladder, yet we wrung all that we could from each height.

''We did not sing every song, yet we sang every note of the song we sang, we did not laugh all the time, but when we did we often laughed until we cried or until our stomachs hurt; and when we cried, we cried until our tears ran dry.

''But most of all we loved, and our love is everlasting, if you look for us listen for us, but most of all live for us.

''We have fallen but you can lift us up. Your love, your faith, your support, and your pride was what we needed then; God's love, grace and mercy is what we need now.''

Lift these young men and women who have been killed in Iraq, lift them up and say to the world, no surge, no more young people will be lost in Iraq. Bring our troops home.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I certainly acknowledge the passion of the former speaker on the floor.

I would just say, though, that all of us have suffered casualties and deaths in our districts. Certainly a gentleman from my former district was killed last week. He was a graduate of Duke University. He was offered scholarships to law school. He was an All American lacrosse player, volunteered to serve in the Army, was in his third tour. His family more than ever supports the effort in Iraq, and you can find families on all sides.

I think it is wrong to somehow suggest that those who died, somehow the families want us to vote for this resolution or against it. We can find sufficient numbers on both sides. Certainly in my experience, most of those would oppose the resolution. I certainly would not impose that on anyone else.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER), a distinguished member from the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. TURNER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for accommodating me so I might have some time to speak on this issue this evening.

Today, Speaker PELOSI has continued with what is called a debate on the Iraq war, but this is not a debate. The floor here is empty, except for the Members scheduled to come to the floor for the record and comment on the failures or success of the war on terror, the conflict in Iraq, prewar intelligence, the search for weapons of mass destruction, reconstruction efforts, al Qaeda, Saddam Hussein and, yes, George Bush. No real debate.

School children across America who are schooled in debate would not recognize what has happened here today, which should be the intellectual process of argument, because to call these series of speeches a debate is fiction, just as to call the nonbinding resolution proposed by the Speaker as congressional action is fiction.

This resolution has no binding effect on the administration, and it does not even have any binding effect on this body of Congress. This resolution is not a document from which decisions will be made or any action taken. This is not policy. This is not governance. It is, at best, a press conference. It is just talk.

The travesty of this fiction of a debate on the House floor is that there is no plan debated or alternatives for us to consider, only opposition. We do not have on the table a plan, an answer, or an action for us to take.

Now, I was not a Member of Congress when this House was asked in October of 2002 to grant the President authority to go into Iraq, and neither were 66 of my Republican Members of Congress. If they were with me they would fill this well, 66 of us that were not here on the Republican side when the President asked for authority to go into Iraq. However, I believe there are 55 Democratic colleagues who voted to send troops to Iraq who are still here today, and yet even those 55 Members who voted to send troops to Iraq offer no alternative plan. At a minimum you would think if you voted ''yes'' to send troops you would feel responsible and have a plan before publicly disapproving of the President's plan.

Now, there is certainly enough about the administration's handling of the Iraq conflict to disapprove of if we were to have a real debate. There is no question that serious mistakes have been

made in the execution of the Iraqi conflict. But today we will not debate solutions because, unfortunately, this resolution does not provide any.

In the war on terror, we have real enemies who want to kill Americans and our allies. No nonbinding resolution passed on this House floor will change that reality.

This is not a debate but it should be. The risks to our country are great. Our enemies and our men and women in uniform are listening. The only proposal brought forth by the Speaker is a statement of opposition and disapproval.

The House and the administration should work together on a bipartisan plan for winning the war on terror, a plan with a commitment that is not undermined by political expediency or partisan division.

□ 1850

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 5½ minutes to my distinguished colleague and friend from North Carolina, who currently is chairman of the Oversight Investigation Subcommittee of the House Financial Services Committee, Mr. WATT.

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

Mr. WATT. Madam Speaker, in October of 2002 I worked meticulously with Members of the Congressional Black Caucus to craft a statement of principles that has proven to be so absolutely prophetic. Listen to what our 2002 principle said, and it will put in context why I feel so strongly that this war has taken us in the wrong direction and why this resolution is so necessary and worthy of our support.

First principle: ''We oppose a unilateral first strike action by the United States without a clearly demonstrated and imminent threat of attack on the United States.''

My colleagues, history will record that the President took first strike action, and that there was neither a clearly demonstrated nor an imminent threat of attack on the United States.

Second principle: ''Only Congress has the authority to declare war.''

History will record that Congress delegated that authority to the President, but I say unapologetically that history will also record that I voted against that delegation of authority. I never believed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction; and, even if it did, I never believed that they posed any imminent threat to the United States.

Third principle: ''Every conceivable diplomatic option must be exhausted.''

History will record that our President instead thumbed his nose at the United Nations and at almost all diplomatic options in his rush to lead us into this foolhardy war.

Fourth principle: ''A unilateral first strike would undermine the moral authority of the United States, destabilize the Middle East region, and undermine the ability of our Nation to address unmet domestic priorities.''

The passage of time has demonstrated and history will record that every single one of these concerns was legitimate and warranted.

Fifth principle: ''Any post-strike plan for maintaining stability in the region would be costly and require a long-term commitment.''

We haven't yet gotten to a level of stability that we are trying to maintain, but the cost of this war today exceeds $500 billion. That is costly and with no end in sight. If we continue to follow the President, the duration of our commitment has no end in sight and no plan to bring home or redeploy our troops.

Increasing the number of troops in Iraq does not make ending the war more foreseeable. Past troop increases in Iraq have paraded under different names than surge, but make no mistake about it, this is not the first time the United States will have increased troop levels, and each time they have been met with greater levels of violence.

From December of 2003 to April 2004, the troop increase paraded under the name ''troop rotation'' and resulted in an increase from 122,000 to 137,000 troops; yet April of 2004 was the second deadliest month for U.S. forces.

From November 2004 to March 2005, the increase paraded under the name ''improving counterinsurgency operations after the Fallujah offensive,'' or ''increasing security after January 2005.'' We increased our troop level to 150,000 troops; the result, no impact on violence increase. And again, September to December of 2005, we went to 160,000 troops, still no decrease in violence.

In most respects, what the President has proposed is business as usual, simply under a different name. It did not work before, and there is no prospect that it will work this time. Madam Speaker, this resolution is one that we should support and bring our troops home.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Resolution. Simply stated, as the Resolution says, I support the troops and I oppose the increase in the number of troops. Simply stated, I support a redeployment of the rest of our troops from Iraq as soon as possible.

But I can't go forward before I review how we got here in the first place. Looking back helps me to put a time perspective on this because this War is now approaching 5 years in duration, a period longer than the Second World War. And looking back also helps me to put a substantive perspective on this that I think is absolutely critical to an understanding of my vote.

It's gut wrenching for me to recall that as early as October 2002—several months before the President proceeded to war in Iraq and long before I was later elected to serve the 2-year term that I have now completed as Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus—I worked meticulously with every single member of the Congressional Black Caucus to craft a Statement of Principles that have proven to be so absolutely prophetic. Listen to what our 2002 Principles said and it will put in context why I feel so strongly that this War has taken us in the wrong direction and why this Resolution is so necessary and worthy of support:

First 2002 Congressional Black Caucus Principle: ''We oppose a unilateral, first-strike action by the United States without a clearly demonstrated and imminent threat of attack on the United States.'' My colleagues, history will record that the President took first strike action and that there was neither a clearly demonstrated nor an imminent threat of attack on the United States.

Second Principle: ''Only Congress has the authority to declare war.'' History will record that Congress delegated that authority to the President, but I say unapologetically that history will also record that I voted against that delegation of authority. I never believed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and—perhaps more importantly—even if they did, I never believed that they posed any imminent threat to the United States. Saddam Hussein was a dastardly tyrant and bully toward his own people, but was a coward and no threat to the United States.

Third Principle: ''Every conceivable diplomatic option must be exhausted.'' History will record that our President, instead, thumbed his nose at the United Nations and at almost all diplomatic options in his rush to lead us into this foolhardy war.

Fourth Principle: ''A unilateral first strike would undermine the moral authority of the United States, destabilize the Middle East region and undermine the ability of our Nation to address unmet domestic priorities.'' The passage of time has demonstrated and history will record that every single one of those concerns was legitimate and warranted.

Fifth Principle: ''Any post-strike plan for maintaining stability in the region would be costly and require a long-term commitment.'' We haven't yet gotten to a level of stability that we're trying to maintain, but the cost of this War to date exceeds $500 billion. That's ''costly'' and with no end in sight. If we continue to follow the President, the duration of our commitment has no end in sight and no plan to bring home or redeploy our troops.

Increasing the number of troops in Iraq does not make ending the War more foreseeable. It will only escalate the number of troops and the prospects of casualties and will likely only increase the resolve of the enemy, the same thing that increases in troop levels have done in the past. Past troop increases in Iraq have paraded under different names than ''surge''. But, make no mistake about it, this is not the first time the United States will have increased troop levels. And each time they have been met with greater violence.

From December of 2003 to April of 2004, the troop increase paraded under the name ''troop rotation'' and resulted in an increase from 122,000 to 137,000 troops. Yet April of 2004 was the second deadliest month for U.S. forces.

From November 2004 to March 2005, the increase paraded under the name ''improving counterinsurgency operations after the Fallujah offensive'' or ''increasing security before the January 2005 constitutional elections'' and increased troops to 150,000. Result: short term positive impact, but longer term increase in violence and resistance.

Between September and December 2005, troop levels were increased again, taking the

number up to 160,000, around the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections. The referendum and elections proceeded without major violence, but the increase had little long term impact on sectarian violence.

In most respects, what the President has proposed is business as usual, simply under a different name. It did not work before and there is little prospect that it will work this time.

Madam Speaker, this Resolution is our attempt to make it clear that we do not support a troop increase or an escalation of this War. I intend to vote for the Resolution. I just hope the President is listening.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I would suggest to the gentleman, while he believes this plan has no chance of working and it is the same as previous plans, the fact is the newly confirmed general in Iraq, General Petraeus, who is by all accounts the most significant general we have had in Iraq, who is the author of the counterinsurgency policy, said it is a significant change and it will work. That is why I would say that while the resolution says it supports the troops, you are in effect undermining the new commander by challenging either his credibility or his competency. And that is a terrible message to the troops.

Mr. WATT. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KING of New York. I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. WATT. I am just sick and tired of people telling us that we are unpatriotic and not supporting of the troops.

Mr. KING of New York. Reclaiming my time, I never suggested unpatriotic. I said you are questioning the competency or credibility of the commander in Iraq, who was just confirmed unanimously by the United States Senate.

Madam Speaker, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN).

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I would just like to say, it was interesting to hear the previous speaker talk about the principles articulated some years ago. They are reminiscent of the arguments I heard on this floor some 20 years ago when Ronald Reagan made the courageous decision to put medium range nuclear weapons into Europe, despite the protest of Europe, despite the protest of many on the other side, despite the fact we were told we were taking a unilateral step.

Sometimes it is difficult to make these decisions, and you can't always guarantee success. And if we always went by that argument, frankly, America would not be where it is today.

Let me begin with a note of bipartisanship, however. It goes without saying that we can all agree that things have not progressed as we wished they would in Iraq. Perhaps we could all agree with the characterization of the Iraq Study Group that the situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating. I think we can all agree that there was therefore a need for a change in the direction of U.S. policy in Iraq.

Not only has this happened, but we have a new Secretary of Defense and, as was stated on the floor just a moment ago, we have a new commander on the ground in Iraq.

It is at this point, however, that I am somewhat mystified by my friends on the other side of the aisle. Since the resolution of disapproval concerning this change in the direction of U.S. policy contains absolutely no alternative, it follows that its adoption represents a tacit endorsement for the policies which we all agree are not working. It is a simple, logical entailment that criticism of a change in policy without any concrete alternative is tantamount to the endorsement of the status quo. Thus, we find ourselves in the ironic situation that to support this resolution is to condone a policy that virtually everyone agrees has not been working.

We are telling our troops that we are sending a new commander. We are telling them by this resolution that we don't support what the new commander is doing. We are saying by this resolution we don't believe that the new plan will work. We are saying, Godspeed, we support you. But we are sending you on a fool's errand.

If you truly believe that, stand up here and have the guts to stop the program by cutting off the money. Take responsibility for your actions, which the Constitution allows you to do.

Let me suggest to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that the absence of any comprehensible policy objective leaves only one element of the resolution intact: Disapproval of the President. And this, in my estimation, is most unfortunate, for there was one thing on which I wish we could all agree. This should not be about George Bush. It is far more important than that.

Our response to the current state of affairs in Iraq will have dramatic consequences not only for the people in Iraq but for the security of the American people as well.

□ 1900

I believe we must resist the temptation to fight over matters which have long ceased to be of any relevance.

The question of whether we should have initially gone into Iraq is simply not the issue. The fact is that we are there, and that is the unpleasant but essential reality to which we must respond. It is not possible to pretend otherwise or to keep looking backward or to keep quoting things that were said in the past or to suggest that we shouldn't be where we are. We are there. It is of little solace to our troops to say, gee, we made a mistake in putting you there, and therefore we are going to pass a resolution of disapproval of what we are asking you to do now. What sense does that make? What sense at all does that make?

It should be acknowledged that findings concerning the absence of a collaborative relationship between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda are not dispositive of the role of al Qaeda in Iraq. As Peter Berger, the only Westerner to conduct an interview on television with Osama bin Laden puts it, there is one thing that bin Laden and Bush agree on, says Peter Berger: that Iraq has become a central front in the war on terror. Berger, who did not support the decision to invade Iraq, warns of a potential repercussion at war's end that could make the blowback from the Afghan war against the Soviets look like high tea at the Four Seasons. This, in my estimation, is why it is so important that the impression not be given that our hand has been forced by Iraqi insurgents, notably al Qaeda of Mesopotamia.

If we have learned anything from the tragic events of the Khobar Towers, the Embassy bombings in East Africa, and the attack on the USS *Cole*, it is that the fanatics' perception of success only serves to embolden those who seek to kill us.

The extreme nature of this murderous mens rea is illustrated in an article in the London Telegraph which reports, ''A husband and wife arrested in the British terror raids allegedly planned to take their 6-month-old baby on a mid-air suicide mission, using the baby's milk bottle to hide a liquid bomb.'' The story is shocking on many levels, but perhaps so disturbing is that it shatters the belief that mothers and fathers share a common commitment to the future of their children.

We face an enemy which subscribes to an ideology rooted in a nihilistic culture of death. This contemporary version of the ''will to power'' seeks justification for a totalist world view through the abuse of a religion to camouflage its deeper roots.

As Paul Berman has chronicled in ''Terrorism and Liberalism,'' this fascist-like ideology arising out of the revisionism of Sayyid al Qutb taught that there was no middle ground and no possibility of compromise. Bin Laden became interested in a radical distortion of Islam from the fiery taped sermons of Abdullah Azzam, a disciple of al Qutb, and came to share Qutb's grim view of the world and used it to justify mass murder.

By the late 1980s, following the crackdown by the Egyptian Government on the extreme Islamist groups in response to the assassination of Sadat in 1981, many of the Islamic militants went into exile. It was through the presence of Egyptian Islamist teachers in Saudi Arabia that bin Laden and other al Qaeda members were influenced; most notably, Ayman al-Zawahiri, a leader in the Egypt Islamic jihad.

Another avenue by which this totalist ideology was introduced to the Middle East via the Vichy Government of France during World War II, which despite its short shelf-life, infected the French mandated territory of Syria-Lebanon. It was during this time that the ideological foundations of the

Baathist Party were laid and a Nazi regime headed by Rahid Ali was set up in Iraq. During this same period, the mufti of Jerusalem was wined and dined by none other than Hitler himself.

The point is that there were some very dark influences on this region of the world which are still playing themselves out today. We cannot believe that our absence from this area will solve problems and allow us to retreat.

We must make no mistake about their intentions: They seek to kill us. Ayman al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda's second in command, has left us with no ambiguity on the matter when he states that they have the right to kill 4 million Americans, 2 million of them children, and to exile twice as many and wound and cripple hundreds of thousands. No, we must not give such people a misapprehension about any misguided notions they may have about their providential place in history.

Although our ultimate objective in Iraq is to hand over power in an orderly fashion to a duly constituted government, the manner in which we do so is of the highest order of importance. That is what I don't hear from the other side. It is not just the question of peace being the absence of war, it is what we will have in the aftermath. What kind of a world will we have in the Middle East? Will it be safer for our children and our grandchildren? Will the implications of our decisions be heard in history as something of which we will be proud, or will it be just that we got tired of the effort?

And if we believe that by absenting ourselves from the area, that solves problems, it has never been the case. It wasn't the case when we got out of Lebanon following the attack on our marines; it was not the case when we basically got out of the area after the USS *Cole*.

Again, independent of the origins of al Qaeda's presence in Iraq, the relevant point is how al Qaeda itself perceives the war there. It is their potential reaction to our Iraqi policy which has most relevance. In this regard, the intercepted letter sent by al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi is most important and has been mentioned on this floor many times. He said, We must think for a long time about our next steps and how we want to attain it, and it is my humble opinion that the jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals.

The first stage: Expel Americans from Iraq.

The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority or emirate, and then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of caliphate over as much territory as you can spread its power in Iraq and Sunni areas in order to fill the void stemming from the departure of the Americans.

The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries of neighboring Iraq.

The fourth stage: Go after Israel.

It is, therefore, clear that regardless of how we might wish the situation to be, wishful thinking, as described in this resolution, is not a basis for policy.

Al Qaeda is present in Iraq, and they perceive it to be a central front in the war. It is simply not possible for us to pretend otherwise, as much as we would like it. This resolution does nothing to help us in this war against Islamic fascism. In fact, it goes in the opposite direction.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I believe that the statements made earlier by our good friend from North Carolina was right to the point. Unilateralism was our policy. We told the world, We don't need you. And what are we doing now? We are practically begging the world to come and help us with this mess that we created.

Diplomacy? Look at the success of the multilateralism that we have now advocated in our dealings with North Korea. But that was not the case with Iraq, and this is why we are having this problem.

Madam Speaker, I gladly yield 5 minutes to my good friend, the gentleman from Missouri, who currently chairs the Subcommittee on Information and Policy, and I am very, very happy to introduce the gentleman for 5 minutes (Mr. CLAY).

Mr. CLAY. I thank the gentleman from American Samoa for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise to declare my absolute and unwavering opposition to the President's plan to escalate this tragic and unnecessary war.

Four years ago, I stood on the floor of this House to oppose the original force authorization resolution. At the time, some of my colleagues cautioned me that I was taking a risk by opposing the President and failing to support the war against terrorism. But I took that position because I believed then and still believe today that great nations do not start wars as a matter of policy, they exercise diplomacy and negotiation to avert threats and achieve security.

□ 1910

The evidence that the administration presented did not clearly establish any imminent threat to our national security. I was convinced that invading Iraq, without international support and without unequivocal evidence that Iraq was involved in 9/11, would dangerously drain our military strength, distract us from fighting the very real terrorist threat, and ultimately weaken our credibility around the world. Now we can see that the world in Iraq has emboldened our enemies and provoked the scorn of our allies.

Madam Speaker, standing here 4 years later, I can only wish that my assumptions were wrong, that invading Iraq was somehow vital to our national security. We were told that there were weapons of mass destruction, and now we know there were no WMDs. We were told that Iraqi oil revenue would pay for this war, and now we know that that was only a pipe dream that has cost American taxpayers over $400 billion. We were told that our troops would be greeted as liberators, and now we know that was only wishful thinking based on neocon fantasies and not the facts.

Today, American troops are embroiled in a bloody quagmire that has already resulted in over 26,000 American casualties. And now, just this past week, the Defense Department Inspector General reported that senior administration officials engaged in a deliberate misinformation campaign about al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. Now we have learned that officials in our government deliberately distributed altered intelligence assessments. Such a misinformation campaign is unconscionable and a greater threat to our national security than any act of terrorism.

We are all familiar with the historian's observation that great nations are not conquered by outside forces until the nation has destroyed itself from within. I implore my colleagues to heed the lessons of history. Do not allow the politics of deception to distort reality.

This administration is denying the facts. It has repeatedly misled the Congress and the American people and undermined our Nation's integrity throughout the world. Now the President is asking Congress to register more support for a policy failure. Escalating the military violence in Iraq by injecting 21,000 more U.S. troops into a civil war reflects nothing more than this administration's obstinate refusal to face present realities.

A vast majority of Americans want a responsible end to this war as soon as possible. They want our troops redeployed, they want us to alleviate the suffering of innocent Iraqis, and they want us to finally tell the Iraqi people that they must be engaged in their country's destiny. The future of Iraq must ultimately be determined by them, not by us.

I want to conclude by quoting a good friend of mine and a fellow colleague, the distinguished chairman of the Armed Forces Committee, IKE SKELTON. In a recent statement he said, ''Only the Iraqis can change the situation there and bring lasting security to their nation. I remain convinced that a gradual and responsible redeployment of U.S. forces is the best way to help the Iraqis take responsibility for their security and to restore the full strength of our military.''

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I would just advise the supporters of the resolution that while Mr. CLAY and others did oppose the war, and I certainly commend them for their consistency, the fact is the Democratic leader at the time and many of the Democratic leaders in the House and the Senate strongly supported the war resolution in October of 2002, both in the House and the Senate.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KING of New York. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. CLAY. Sure, we had Democrats on this side supporting it. It didn't make it right. It certainly didn't make it right. We were given false information. This Congress and the country was given false information.

Mr. KING of New York. Reclaiming my time, both former President Clinton and others have said that he saw the same intelligence as President Bush did.

With that, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVID DAVIS), a newly elected Member.

Mr. DAVID DAVIS of Tennessee. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to the resolution but in support of our troops.

According to former Congressman, Senator, and Secretary of State Daniel Webster, ''God grants liberty only to those who love it and are always ready to guard and defend it.'' That was true in the mid 1800s and it is still true today.

I represent the First District of Tennessee. Tennessee is known as the Volunteer State because of our heavy involvement in the Mexican War and the willingness of our men and women down through history to volunteer for service to our country.

Right now, there are brave men and women in our armed services who are sacrificing for our freedom. The people of the First District of Tennessee and I are indeed indebted for their service and we thank these brave soldiers and we pray for them and their families.

There are some who would want to limit their discussion to Iraq, while in fact we are involved in a global war on terror. We must be committed to win this war on terror that was started by radical Islamic extremists. This war did not start on September 11. We have been in a war for many years.

Many of you will recall the Iranian hostage crisis, 1979, 52 Americans held hostage, 444 days.

As we move forward in history, the Beirut bombings, 1983. Two hundred forty-one of our brave marine soldiers were killed.

Then we had the first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993.

Then we had the USS *Cole* in 2000. Seventeen Americans killed.

Then finally, September 11, 2001, 3,000 Americans killed.

This war didn't start on September 11 and this war is not with Iraq. This is a war with radical Islam. We are involved to win a battle with terrorists who hate us, who hate our freedoms and who quite frankly hate our religion. The extremists have engaged us in battle. We owe it to our fellow citizens to see that we have nothing less than total victory.

Congress should not micromanage this war. We have one Commander in Chief. It is fine to disagree and to point out mistakes, but this resolution is a step to weaken the morale of our troops and it will embolden our enemies. We cannot allow this to become another Vietnam situation, a situation where politicians tried to manage the war.

My emotions run high as I remember that era. My first cousin, Fred Gouge, was laid to rest just 1 week ago. Fred was wounded in that war in Vietnam, a war that was micromanaged by politicians. Because of that conflict, he spent the better part of the last 40 years in a wheelchair. He received a Purple Heart for his service. He was a war hero, just like the men and women of our military are right now.

We cannot afford to ignore the advice of General Petraeus, who was recently unanimously approved by the Senate, and the advice of his commanders. I would ask, Madam Speaker, what message does a nonbinding resolution really send? This resolution says that this Congress will support our troops who have defended our freedoms, or who are currently serving in harm's way, but that is little comfort for those brave men and women who would be called upon to protect us and our families in the future. This nonbinding resolution is only playing politics with our brave soldiers, their lives and our future as a nation. To suggest that we can support the troops but not be in the battle to win is ridiculous and shortsighted.

I can remember as a child watching many different western television shows. Growing up, I don't know of many my age that didn't want to be the cowboy in the Wild West. After seeing many of these stories, you realize that when the hero is in trouble, they sound the alarm, or blow the trumpet, and in races the cavalry to join their brothers in arms to win the fight.

Madam Speaker, the trumpet has been sounded. It is time for the cavalry to join our brothers and sisters in arms to gain victory in this global war on terror. As the trumpet has been sounded, we have politicians in Washington who want to sit on their hands and not send in the troops.

Looking at the latest news, as additional forces are moving in, radical Islamic leaders like al-Sadr are fleeing for their strongholds. It has been reported that he has left Iraq for his own protection. The additional troops are already having a positive impact on the region. We have the ability to win this war on terrorism, and we must win this war to protect America today and for our future generations.

Madam Speaker, that is why I will join many of my colleagues in voting ''no'' on this resolution.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I could not agree more with my good friend in just quoting Daniel Webster. ''God grants liberty to those who love it.'' The problem that I have right now is that I don't know if the people among the Shiites and the Sunnis love liberty that much to want to make sacrifices. The point of the matter is Saddam Hussein tortured and murdered over 300,000 Shiites. One mass grave contained 30,000 dead bodies. So we have got a real serious problem here.

I gladly yield 5 minutes to the distinguished lady from the State of Texas, the chairlady of the Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee on environment.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, the American people want a new direction in Iraq and I expect Congress to act accordingly. They really do think that this is a democracy and that this is representative government.

□ 1920

It has been almost 4 years since this administration declared the end of major combat in Iraq. He declared mission accomplished. Since this declaration, we have seen more than 3,000 of our military killed in combat, and more than 22,000 injured.

We cannot forget that these are not just numbers. These are our sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters. They are now more than 3,000 men and women who will never return home to be with their families. Many are so young, at 18, 19 and 20 years old, their lives have ended before they ever really began.

I started my professional career as a psychiatric nurse at the Dallas Veterans Administration Hospital, and I observed firsthand the physical and psychological trauma that the returning young people faced from the Vietnam war.

It is a long-term battle for them and their families as they learn to live with these disabilities. We are in a war with no end in sight, and now we are talking about troop escalation. How many more young lives are we going to lose? How many more soldiers will face long-term disabilities, life-long disabilities? The experts have weighed in on this issue, and they have said we are making a mistake to escalate.

The President sent a group of experts to design a new course for Iraq. The President's experts did not recommend additional troops. In fact, they recommended the very opposite.

Madam Speaker, it is time to listen to the experts and the commanders on the ground. Our troops are faced with an impossible task of policing a civil war. Each day we hear of sectarian attacks and bombings. Our troops are caught in the middle with no real strategy to end this violence. A great American military cannot be a substitute for a weak Iraqi government.

We need to focus on diplomatic solutions and training Iraq's security forces so they can take care of themselves and patrol their own country. With this escalation, we are just compounding the problem. We should concentrate on training the Iraqi security forces. They must know that this is not going to be an open-ended situation.

Madam Speaker, my constituents in north Texas continue to grieve the loss of their sons and daughters. They are

concerned for our troop safety and they are demanding answers. The war is costing us too many lives and too much money, $1 billion a week. At an overall cost of $500 billion, we will be paying the cost of this war for decades to come.

In my congressional district in Dallas, Texas, our share of the cost will be $1 billion. In Dallas this would have provided 400,000 children with health care or paid for 23,000 additional police officers. For our Nation's 300 million Americans, their share will be $1,300 a piece.

Accountability of Iraq war spending has been appalling. Does there exist any accountability? Last week we began the congressional hearings regarding contracting fraud. Apparently there is $12 billion unaccounted for. Contractors were being paid with large bags of cash.

This is truly an embarrassment and the height of irresponsibility as thousands of American children go to bed hungry tonight. Many are children of our troops, and now we are talking about spending more money and adding more troops. We need to end this, redeployment needs to start now.

Madam Speaker, we have before us a bipartisan resolution opposing the escalation of troops in Iraq. However, this debate is only the first step. The ultimate goal is to bring our troops home safely and swiftly. It is time for the President to listen to the American people and his advisers and refrain from changing the leadership when they disagree with him.

The best way to support our troops serving in Iraq is to say ''no'' to the President's escalation of this war. An outstanding general said recently that stubbornness cannot be mistaken as leadership and cliches cannot be called policy.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, various supporters of the resolution can point to this general or that general. I would point to the general who was most recently confirmed and unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate, who is the author of this plan. I will stand by him.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LATHAM).

Mr. LATHAM. I thank the gentleman from New York for allowing me this time.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to share everyone's frustration with the mistakes that have been made in Iraq, and the fact that progress has not been made as fast as we would all have liked. I would say, though, before you cast your vote on this resolution, I think it is only fair to remind Members of this Chamber that the main thrust of this resolution focuses only on one of at least 10 of the recommendations the administration is carrying out based upon the work of the Iraq Study Group. Others include shifting our primary mission to training and equipping Iraqi security units and embedding more U.S. soldiers in the Iraqi military.

The administration has also pledged to hold the Iraqi Government accountable to its commitments to take primary responsibility for security in all of Iraq's provinces by November, establishing a fair constitutional amendment process, reforming de-Baathification laws, creating a fair oil revenue sharing arrangement and holding local elections.

Let me also remind the Democratic majority that when the Iraq Study Group announced its recommendations, the Democratic leaders publicly stated they hoped the President would embrace the report. But when the administration proposed carrying out policy recommendations by the study group, which included a surge in troops, the Democrats backed away and took the cynical approach, oppose and criticize, rather than to offer to work for real solutions.

Some Members of this body will use this week's nonbinding resolution to run away from the vote that they cast in 2003. I will suggest to you that history will judge this Congress in a manner many of you have not considered. In my judgment, every Member who votes in favor of this resolution is endorsing the Democratic Party's decision to manage the war from Capitol Hill.

After all, as the debate on this resolution got under way this week, the Democrat leadership in this House made it perfectly clear that the resolution is just the first effort by the majority to begin a Democratic-led legislative micromanagement of this war.

It is said that Colin Powell advised the President on Iraq, if you break it, you own it. So I want to tell the Democratic majority that with this resolution, your plan to micromanage this war through your legislative initiatives, you are taking possession of this war.

With this resolution, you are taking over the day-to-day management of this conflict, and at the same time taking the onus off of the President. Let me say that again. You are now responsible for the outcome of this war.

The Democratic majority has determined that solutions to our most complicated conflicts can be solved through nonbinding resolutions, and I predict forcing the President's hand by cutting off the funding for our men and women in uniform, just like they did in Vietnam. Our soldiers fought gallantly in Vietnam as they do today in Iraq, but the legislative micromanagement by the U.S. Congress during the Vietnam era, and in decisions to cut funding for our military mission in Southeast Asia, only tied the hands of our warriors, but it not only tied the hands of our warriors, it demoralized our men and women in uniform for decades.

Ladies and gentlemen, the new majority has not learned from the mistakes of the past, but has arrogantly concluded that House Democrats can take command and control of our strategy and our troops in Iraq from the floor of this Chamber. Keep in mind, now that the Democratic leadership has assumed the role of Commanders in Chief, the consequences of failures are now also theirs. Just as the North Vietnamese changed their strategy and were emboldened by the misguided actions of the Congress, so too will the enemies of freedom in Iraq be emboldened by this and subsequent resolutions by this Congress.

Furthermore, if the majority party's political rhetoric corresponds with their legislative agenda on Iraq, you can rest assured that the humanitarian disaster will be yours. The jihadist victory will be yours. The rogue state coalition of Iran and Syria will be yours.

□ 1930

A genocidal Sunni-Shiite-Arab civil war will be yours. You will have handed al Qaeda victory and empowered its homicidal leaders. Again with this resolution, the Democratic majority has seized control of this conflict. And again, remember what Colin Powell said: If you break it you own it.

History will not focus on your voting for the resolution authorizing the force, but they will long remember you unleashing the hell that is going to come in Iraq by voting for this resolution.

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

Madam Speaker, I would say in response to the gentleman's comments, we gladly accept the responsibility. That responsibility was truly exhibited in the election in November. This is the reason why we are taking action. I think this resolution, every bit, is part of that accepting the responsibility and the will of the American people who have spoken in the November election. I just want to note that.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), who is currently chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Economic Development in the Transportation Committee.

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time. I thank him for the disproportionate service of his own constituents in this war.

As the House prepares to consider a bill for the first full House vote in two centuries for the taxpaying American citizens who live in the Nation's Capital, that have fought in all our wars, I dedicate these words to the first D.C. resident to die in the Iraq war, 21-year-old National Guard Specialist Darryl Dent of the 54th Transportation Company, and to the other residents of the District of Columbia who have died in this war without a vote in this House.

Like the soldiers from every State and territory, Specialist Dent did not have the luxury of equivocation. He

acted, so must we. With uncommon bravery, loss of life, and unique injuries, our troops have acted. So must we.

The resolution before us asks quite simply: Whose side are we on? Do we support our troops best by committing another 20,000 to a war where only they must act and only they are accountable? Do we support our troops by sending more of them to another battle of Baghdad while the insurgents scatter to return as before, unless, of course, our troops are to be permanently deployed in the cross-hairs of a civil war?

Do we support our troops by sending 20,000 more whose lives will be in the hands of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the man we are asked to believe will help put down the militias responsible for civil war conditions, although their leaders are part of his government?

Madam Speaker, the vote this resolution seeks is about our troops more than about the war. Four years of worsening insurgency have rendered a verdict of its own on the war, that even great powers cannot alone win another country's civil war without its leadership and without diplomacy.

Yet another verdict on this war has been rendered by the migration of 2 million Iraqis; among them, the physicians and other professionals who will be desperately needed in postwar Iraq. The 50,000 monthly who flee for safety have created the largest refugee crisis in the Mideast since 1948.

No, Madam Speaker, dispatching 20,000 more American troops to Iraq is not about the war, it is about those troops and the troops that are already there. Most tragically, this war will be remembered for citizen soldiers like Specialist Darryl Dent, the largest number to be uprooted from family and job since World War II.

Recently more than 60 percent of the fatalities were National Guard soldiers who typify average Americans, computer operators, teachers, police officers, who joined to serve at home but were always ready and willing to serve anywhere.

By what right do we call on them again, some for the second or the third time? Devoted though they remain, declining enrollment has had to be bolstered by increasing incentives to preserve the volunteer, all-volunteer military. Here in the capital, the Guard's unique mission to protect the Federal presence is at risk, just as those called away from every State have weakened homeland protection and security.

As Mississippi and Louisiana Guards were serving in Iraq, Guard units from every State except Hawaii plus 7,500 active duty soldiers were necessary during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. By what right do we surge troops into Iraq? Are we about to throw more citizen soldiers and weekend warriors with truncated training into a war with results like those of 2005?

Reserve and Guard were 10 percent of the fatalities during major combat in March and April of 2003. By August of 2005, 57 percent of U.S. fatalities were reservists that year. How can we ask our troops to give yet again? They have given to the preemptive war against weapons of mass destruction that did not exist. They have given as the war morphed into a war for democracy that is not yet in sight.

The question before us, my friend, is not what will the President do or even what will we do. The question before us is what more can we ask our troops to do after 4 years of repetitive brave combat duties?

The question answers itself. Let the troops pass the baton to the Iraqis. Bring our troops home to their children, their families, their mortgages, and, yes, to all of us.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the lives of our troops are in the hands of General Petraeus, and his credibility is undermined by this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD).

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

Mr. LAHOOD. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution. More importantly, I rise today to express my support for our Commander in Chief and the men and women serving in the Armed Forces. It is simply not possible to claim that you support the troops while completely disavowing their mission.

Our troops in Iraq put their mission first, above all else, even their own safety. How can we even consider passing a resolution stating that we do not support providing them the manpower that they need to accomplish their mission? How does this support the morale? How does this show them that we have confidence in their abilities?

As we all know, this resolution has no real legal authority, it is preemptive, purely political, without taking the difficult step of offering an alternative proposal. At first I thought this debate was simply political theater, 3 days of speeches and sound bites.

But now we are learning this resolution is simply the first step. The gentleman from Virginia quoted in The Washington Post yesterday, saying: This is just the bark, this resolution is the bark, the real bite will be in 2 weeks when they trot out a continuing resolution or appropriation bill that will cut off the funds to the troops.

I hope you are all relishing the opportunity to support that appropriation to cut off the troops. This is the bark. The next the step is to cut off the funds.

I supported the original resolution authorizing force. I have served on the Intelligence Committee for 8 years, and I believe we have done the right thing. I believe our troops have done the right thing.

Saddam is gone. He has been tried and executed; 12 million Iraqis, over 70 percent of the people, have voted for their own leadership. The army and the police are being trained. Schools and hospitals are being built and opened. Coalition forces have done the best they can under extraordinary circumstances.

Iraqis need to continue to take control of the security. And in every discussion we have had with the Commander in Chief, he has been on the phone talking to the Prime Minister, persuading him that the American people are becoming impatient, that he has to take control of his government, he has to stand up an army, he has to stand up a police force.

I believe the Commander in Chief, the President, will hold the Prime Minister's feet to the fire and hold the Iraqi Government accountable so that they can begin to take full control of the responsibilities.

I think when that happens we will have achieved a great deal. I will not vote for this resolution that does nothing but show our enemies that the House of Representatives does not support our military. This ignores the more than 3,100 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice. We turn our backs on the 3,100 when we pass a resolution like this.

□ 1940

And we also turn our backs on those that are doing the hard work in Iraq today. When I have had opportunities to visit those who have served from my district, who have come back, I have not heard one word of complaining, not one word of whining, no wringing of hands, only an opportunity to serve.

And so I urge my colleagues to stand up for the troops, stand up for the military, stand up for those who have done the hard work. Stand up for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Vote down this resolution and send the message that we stand with those who stand for freedom and hope and opportunity.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I submit it is not General Petraeus that we are questioning here. It is the decision of our Commander in Chief, our President, his decision to deploy some 20,000 troops, additional troops to this mess that we created in Iraq. We planned and carried out this war on the cheap, saying we only needed 140,000 when in fact the experts said we needed at least 250,000 or 300,000 to complete and do the job. That didn't happen. So why do you think that adding another 20,000 troops is going to make that much difference? That is what is at issue and I think this is what we need to debate on.

Madam Speaker, I gladly yield 5 minutes to my good friend from North Carolina, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) for yielding this time to me, and thank the Speaker for convening this very important debate this evening.

Madam Speaker, I come to the floor this evening to express my unconditional support for H. Con. Res. 63. I also come to the floor this evening to thank the leadership, to thank Speaker NANCY PELOSI and the majority leader, and Chairman IKE SKELTON for their leadership on this issue, and thank them very much for scheduling this debate. I am confident that the American people are also appreciative of this debate.

Madam Speaker, 4 years ago, shortly before I was elected to this body, the President of the United States convinced this Congress that dictator Saddam Hussein had in his possession weapons of mass destruction, and that he was prepared to use those weapons against our country. The world now knows that he was wrong, and history will decide whether that intelligence was manipulated or whether it was an honest mistake.

But this evening, Madam Speaker, the invasion we all know, happened. We captured Baghdad, and we arrested Saddam Hussein, and he has now been convicted and executed. But the search for weapons of mass destruction revealed that there were no weapons whatsoever.

Our aim then turned to helping the Iraqi people create a democratic government with free and fair elections, a constitution was ratified, and elected representatives are now making decisions on what is best for their country. The Iraqi Government has a security force in place, and we are assisting in training them to defend their country.

In 4 years of fighting the brave men and women of our Armed Forces have accomplished every mission put before them. They have performed admirably and completed all that is possible militarily possible in Iraq. There is an intractable problem on the ground in Iraq. The tensions between the sectarian groups are centuries old. We all know that, and our continued presence is exacerbating those tensions. It is no longer a military problem, but a political problem best resolved through diplomacy.

It is clear, Madam Speaker, that a continued open-ended military action is not in the best interest of our country. It is not in the best interest of the Iraqi people or the citizens of the Persian Gulf region. We have reached the point where we need to turn Iraq over to the Iraqis. Iraqis know that, so that the Iraqis will know that the U.S. is not an occupying force.

Since the invasion we have lost 3,000 lives. We have heard that for the last 2 days. And so many of those injuries are permanent. The financial cost of this war exceeds $400 billion. The President is now seeking another $245 billion to finance the war over the next 18 months.

Madam Speaker, if those funds were invested in rural America, there is no question that we would improve thousands of lives in our own country.

Our military and their families are tremendously strained. Some troops are on their fourth and fifth deployments. Military personnel costs are skyrocketing. Further strains on our Armed Forces will leave this country unprepared for a wide range of threats that now exist. At a cost to the American taxpayer of nearly $2 billion a week, we simply will not have the resources needed to prepare for the wide variety of future threats that our country may have to face and for our domestic needs at home.

America has a problem and we must fix it. This debate this evening is the first step in a new direction. Our goals in Iraq have been accomplished, and it is now time to begin bringing our troops home. Now is not the time for escalation. Surges have not helped before, and they will not help now.

The time has come to redeploy and reset our force to begin addressing our other challenges around the world and give us an opportunity to repair our relationships with our allies and refocus on the war on terror.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, I would say to my good friend from American Samoa that one of the reasons why I do refer to General Petraeus is he is one of those who put this plan together and he says it will work, and for people to belittle his plan or to ridicule it or to adopt for the first time in history a resolution attacking his strategic plan is an attack on either his credibility or his competency. You can't have it both ways.

Madam Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS), who has been to Iraq 15 times.

Mr. SHAYS. Madam Speaker, it is good we are having this debate. As a 20-year veteran of this place, I am, frankly, impressed with the heartfelt and articulate statements from both sides of the aisle. On matters of war and peace, it is imperative we do what is right for our country, as we see it, and then live personally with the consequences.

Critics of the war in Iraq wanted new leadership at the Department of Defense, new military leadership on the ground, and a new plan to stabilize Iraq and bring our troops home.

We have a new Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, new Commanding General of Multinational Forces, David Petraeus, who everyone acknowledged is as perfect a person for this job as we could find, and a new strategy to clean up, hold and rebuild the neighborhoods with a short-term buildup of our forces.

The Democratic majority in the House has introduced a resolution condemning this strategy, expressing disapproval, without offering any alternatives. Ironically, they offer a stay the course resolution.

The majority is clear on what it is against, but does not say what it is for, leaving us with what exists right now, the status quo.

The resolution sends the wrong message to the President, to our troops, and to our enemies. It will not get my vote.

We need a resolution to help resolve this conflict, not a symbolic resolution that gives no guidance on how we can help stabilize Iraq and bring our troops home.

Working with Congressman FRANK WOLF and others, we helped create the Iraq Study Group, bipartisan experts led by Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton who offered fresh eyes on Iraq and offered specific recommendations.

The Iraq Study Group made three recommendations, transfer responsibility for police patrolling the streets from American troops to Iraqi security forces; two, encourage Sunnis and Shias to resolve their differences or face the consequences, American troops leaving; and, three, conduct a robust diplomatic effort with all of Iraq's neighbors to engage them in the country's future.

The White House has implemented the first and second of those recommendations but, regretfully, not the third.

The Study Group provided a road map resoundingly endorsed by members from both political parties. It is a missed opportunity that the resolution we are debating this week does not incorporate these three recommendations.

I know there are many Americans who are concerned about a short-term increase in troops to secure and regain control of Baghdad. I understand their concern. Two years ago I believed this strategy had a better than even chance to work. Today it is less likely to succeed, but it is still the best opportunity we have.

□ 1950

But this strategy will only work if Iraqi troops do their part; Sunni and Shia politicians resolve their differences, meeting benchmarks against firm timelines like they did in 2005; and the U.S. and Iraq engage in a diplomatic surge with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Syria and Iran.

We also need to be prepared with plan B if this plan fails. It seems to me plan B involves taking our troops out of harm's way, removing them from the urban areas, and placing them along the borders so Iraq's neighbors, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Turkey, are not tempted to enter Iraq.

And if plan B fails, we will have no choice but to leave, having been defeated, having lost to the Islamist terrorists who have made it very clear this is just the beginning.

In essence, our troops deserve to know we have a plan to win. If we do not have a plan to win, we need a plan to leave. The resolution before the House neither helps us succeed nor gives us guidance on when and how to leave. It is counterproductive.

It is so counterproductive, for 535 Members of the House of Representatives and Senate to micromanage the war. It is the responsibility of the administration to conduct the war effort. It is Congress's responsibility to conduct tough oversight, hold the administration accountable for the implementation of the war.

Having chaired 14 hearings on the operations in Iraq and been to Iraq 15 times to conduct on-the-ground oversight, I will continue to ask the administration the tough questions and to provide, to the best of my ability, my observations and recommendations.

Regretfully, too few Members of Congress have fully considered the consequence of leaving Iraq prematurely. The Iraq Study Group warned, ''If the situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate, the consequence could be severe for Iraq, the United States, the region, and the world.'' This is what members of the Iraq Study Group said on a bipartisan basis, Republicans and Democrats united.

The ultimate goal for me is to bring our troops home without leaving Iraq in chaos. This is still achievable if Republicans and Democrats, the White House and Congress, agree on a bipartisan solution and then carry it out with steely resolve. Officially endorsing the recommendations of that Iraq Study Group and acting on them is the best way to make this happen.

The only way we should leave Iraq is the same way we went in: together.

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

I just want to note with interest also in my good friend from New York's observations, on this side of the aisle we are in no way trying to criticize or humiliate the integrity of the great general that is now leading our forces in Iraq. In fact, I have the utmost respect for General Petraeus. He received his doctoral dissertation from Princeton University on counterinsurgency; and that is why, as the former commander of the 101st Airborne Division, he was so successful as a general up in Mosul. So I think we need to have that framework understood with my good friend from New York. We are not questioning the integrity of the good general, General Petraeus. It is the decision made by our President, who is the Commander in Chief, that we are debating about in this great debate that we are having this evening.

Madam Speaker, I want to yield 5½ minutes to my good friend, the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE), a distinguished member of the Financial Services Committee.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman so much for yielding.

First of all, I must humbly acknowledge what a difficult situation we face in Iraq, and I respect the passionate debate on both sides. And I must concede that I don't really have a cohesive, comprehensive plan for fixing Iraq. And, indeed, the Iraq Study Group has indicated that really no one can guarantee that any course of action in Iraq at this point will stop sectarian warfare, growing violence, or the slide toward chaos.

Our intelligence community recently found that the violence in Iraq is now a self-sustaining sectarian struggle. Our military leaders have indicated that a prolonged occupation cannot prevent what already exists: little political accommodation, hardening sectarian divisions, and a growing civil war.

It has been asked what the majority is for. Well, I can tell you that I am for standing down from these policies in Iraq that have been based primarily on fear and pride. Fear can be false evidence appearing real, and fear is one of the most destructive afflictions that can affect the human mind, and often, as we have seen, feeds aggression. Pride, of course, is one of the seven deadly sins, and it is an excessive belief in one's own abilities and is often called the sin from which all others arise. Oh, we are going to be great liberators.

Fear can appear and make you see a false reality. As the ancient author Lactantius said, ''Where fear is present, wisdom cannot be.''

In 2003 America's fear of weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein, and al Qaeda bolstered arguments for going to war. Fear outraced the facts, and 4 years later our troops find themselves in a civil war.

Today this debate, this call for an escalation, is led by fear. We hear the dire predictions about withdrawing from Iraq: Oh, if we leave, civil war and bloodshed will continue. Sadly, the reality is if we stay, civil war and bloodshed will continue. Pride blinds our actions just as much as fear, and some have said that ego is the defender of fear. A requirement of pride, indeed a symptom, is that each challenge to our pride drives us harder to improve our illusions and keep up appearances. Oh, we are going to achieve victory. Oh, we have got to maintain the morale and pride of the forces. Oh, if we don't succeed, we don't support our troops. And if we send more troops, we are sending the wrong message. A very precarious warning about pride that I think we are all familiar with is that ''pride cometh before a fall.'' In order for us to consider what our real interests in Iraq and the Middle East are, we have to get past stoking fear and pride.

Fact: The U.S. is not going to impose democracy on Iraq by military force. And no matter how proud we are, no matter how much we may wish, no matter when we leave, the U.S. will leave an Iraq that is in pieces, not at peace. The U.S. alone cannot stabilize the Middle East. Will our pride prevent us from reaching out and being honest brokers and invite others in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, to help stabilize Iraq? It is said that the punishment for pride is being broken on the wheel, and our budget and military readiness is being broken on the wheel.

There are a lot of things I would like to see in Iraq, Madam Speaker: more political and economic opportunities for women, respect for law, the emerging of democratic institutions. But as the Iraq Study Group noted, achieving the goal of having an Iraq that can govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself will require much time and depend primarily on the actions of the Iraqi people, not American troops.

Mr. KING of New York. Madam Speaker, again I would suggest to these supporters of the resolution that the President's key advisers, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace, and the new commander in Iraq, General Petraeus, strongly support this increase in troops.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Washington State (Mr. REICHERT).

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I support our troops wholeheartedly and without reservation, but I cannot support a resolution that simply opposes a new strategy without offering any alternative plan to win. There is too much at stake.

□ 2000

Let us just think about where we are today as a country, about the global war we are in with people with intent to kill Americans and how that affects our strategy in Iraq. When considering this, we must consider our Nation's history and other difficult times of war.

There have been many bleak moments in America's history, battles we have been engaged in where American victory was far from certain.

In 1942, hell bent on dominating the world with his ideology, Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich systematically marched through Europe, taking the most basic freedoms from the Jewish people and killing millions. The United States entered World War II reluctantly and we were not ready for the hurdles we faced.

Don't forget, there were times when victory was far from certain. The outlook was grim. Many Americans and Europeans alive today can remember how bleak those times were as the war drug on and on and on. But we didn't give up. We persevered, because we knew there was too much at stake.

Eighty years before World War II, in 1862, President Lincoln faced a war that most believed could not be won. He faced vocal and unrelenting criticism for his resolve to win the Civil War. When the war began, Lincoln called for 74,000 troops for 90 days; 74,000 troops for 90 days. And history has showed us that Lincoln greatly underestimated the resources needed, because, as we know, over 620,000 soldiers were killed during that war.

At a time in our history when it might have been politically expedient to win the Civil War without first achieving victory, President Lincoln pressed on, constantly seeking a new strategy, until he found one that worked because so much was at stake.

Perhaps some of the resolve Lincoln displayed came from lessons he learned 15 years earlier when he entered a smaller battle. In 1848, Abraham Lincoln was an often criticized young

freshman Member of this body, the House of Representatives, and was facing a difficult point in his career. Lincoln criticized the reasons President Polk gave for getting us into the Mexican-American War, a war that began before Lincoln came to office, a position that I can identify with today as I stand here.

Then-Congressman Lincoln voted for a resolution that stated the Mexican-American War was ''unnecessarily and unconstitutionally'' initiated by President Polk. Lincoln thought the war was nothing more than a political move to grab land from the Mexican people.

My friends, it is legitimate and in fact our duty to question the reasons why our country goes to war, and Abraham Lincoln showed us that. However, he also showed us something else. Abraham Lincoln made an incredibly important distinction that we can learn from today.

A Lincoln biographer, Doris Kearns Goodwin, writes that after being criticized for that vote ''Lincoln sought to clarify his position, arguing that although he had challenged the instigation of the war he had never voted against supplies for the soldiers.''

This is an important point to make again. Lincoln sought to clarify his position, arguing that although he had challenged the instigation of the war he had never voted against supplies for the soldiers. Lincoln knew the damage of condemning a war while claiming to support the troops. Yet that is what this resolution before us does today.

During the American Revolution, the men and women who had become this country's first citizens were declared by the King of England to be in rebellion. The King sent soldiers across the Atlantic to quell the uprising.

In every war, it is the average citizen who stands up and fights for his neighbor's freedom. It is the same today. In response to the King of England's attack, again it was the average citizen who raised his hand, volunteered, stood up and fought for our freedom. A bookstore owner, the manager of an iron foundry and a land surveyor all stood and fought for our freedom. Those men were Henry Knox, Nathaniel Green and George Washington.

During America's War for Independence, it was not clear if we would prevail then. We lost battle after battle. Troops deserted the battlefields. General Washington and his deputies persevered, continuing to engage the enemy until the tide turned, because so much was at stake.

We are the United States of America today and we are free because General Washington refused to quit. We are the United States of America today and we are free because Abraham Lincoln refused to quit. And we are the United States of America today and we are free because Roosevelt and Truman refused to quit. And we are the United States of America today and we are free because of the sacrifice of the men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line in Iraq, Afghanistan and all around the world, preserving our freedom.

Today, the United States is engaged in another war, and just as before we face an enemy that wants to destroy our way of life. Just as before we face an enemy that thinks it is winning. Just as before our country is divided. Just as before we are making mistakes. Just as before we face a moment of truth about what to do next. And just as before the consequences of losing are devastating.

The enemy is clear about what their intentions are by what they say and what they do. Al Qaeda and the global movement that it has spawned have made it clear they want nuclear and biological weapons. It is clear they want to kill us, Americans. Osama bin Laden has called acquiring nuclear weapons a ''religious duty.'' The fact is we are engaged in a global war with people intent on killing Americans, and regardless of how we got into Iraq, Iraq is now the central front of that war.

And yet while we debate this nonbinding resolution, what is really at stake is winning or losing. Like Lincoln, I was not in this office as the war began. I understand the arguments. I understand the questions. I have been asking questions, too, as an elected official in this body for the past 2 years, as a concerned citizen, and before that, as a veteran. I understand that there are many who think we should never have entered Iraq. We now know there was faulty intelligence that led to that decision.

But the war is upon us nonetheless. I am elected to deal with what is happening now. Will we succeed? Will we win? Just as at other moments in our history, those questions stand unanswered. The consequences of declaring an end to the war in Iraq without victory would be felt for decades. Our enemies around the world would be emboldened. Iran and al Qaeda would declare victory. Our allies in Iraq would certainly face bloodshed, and our allies around the world would question our resolve to help protect them.

Sergeant Eddie Jeffers is a U.S. Army infantryman serving in Ramadi, Iraq. Sergeant Jeffers has a firsthand appreciation for what is at stake in Iraq and our presence there and what it means to the Iraqi people.

He writes, ''We are the hope of the Iraqi people. They want what everyone else wants in life: Safety, security, somewhere to call home. They want a country that is safe to raise their children in. They want to live on, rebuild and prosper. And America has given them that opportunity, but only if we stay true to the cause and see it to its end. But the country must unite in this endeavor. We cannot place the burden on our military alone. We must all stand and fight, whether in uniform or not. Right now the burden is all on the American soldier. Right now hope rides alone. But it can change. It must change, because there is only failure and darkness ahead for us as a country, as a people, if it doesn't.''

Sergeant Jeffers' words hit at the heart of our present challenge in Iraq. Our current strategy in Iraq is failing, and yet failure is not an option. In November, the American people told us they wanted a new strategy, not because they wanted to lose, but because they wanted to win. Now we have a new strategy before us.

Is this new plan going to work? I don't know. No one in this body who is voting on this resolution knows.

□ 2010

What I do know is that we must find a way to achieve victory, and simply saying ''no'' to a new plan without offering up an alternative will not work and sends a terrible message to our enemies and our soldiers.

This is an historic war. America is engaged in a war for our freedoms on a scale that we have never experienced before. I understand the dissension, the questions and the uncertainty.

I understand the cost is high and the way is often unclear. I have served in law enforcement for 33 years. I understand the loss. I have lost partners and friends in the line of duty. I understand the cost of freedom and the sacrifices that must be made. The sacrifices are hard, they are tragic and they are never forgotten, but we must remain focused and not let those sacrifices be in vain.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this resolution. Lincoln warned us against tying a criticism of the war to support for our troops. Let us send a message to our enemies and our troops alike that we will always support our young men and women who put their lives on the line for our freedom.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as I may consume at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I support House Concurrent Resolution 63, and I want to thank our chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON); also, our chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS); and especially the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES), my good friend and colleague, as original cosponsors of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) and Mr. Richard Solomon of the United States Institute of Peace for their initiative and leadership to establish what is commonly known today as the Iraq Study Group, composed of nationally recognized leaders from both political parties, and co-chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Mr. Lee Hamilton.

The Iraq Study Group conducted for well over eight months a most comprehensive review, in my humble opinion, of the crisis that we are now faced

with in Iraq, and I sincerely hope that in the weeks and months to come that we here in this body will review seriously its recommendations for a resolution to the conflict in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, almost 5 years ago, as a member of the House International Relations Committee, I voted in support of the resolution which authorized our President to use military force against Saddam Hussein and his military regime, for the most critical reason presented by our President, our Vice President, our Secretary of Defense, and our National Security Adviser, that Saddam Hussein had in his possession supposedly nuclear weapons. Our Nation's own national security was severely at risk, imminent danger. These were the phrases that were used. And besides for other reasons, the nuclear issue was the linchpin, in my humble opinion, that convinced many of us on both sides of the aisle to approve the resolution to allow our President to wage war against Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation, and especially the American people, have now come to realize that Saddam Hussein never had in his possession nuclear weapons, due to faulty intelligence and misleading statements made by top officials of this administration in order to totally change the atmosphere to have the public believe that our number one public enemy was Saddam Hussein and not Osama bin Laden.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues, how in the world did we end up in Iraq and we have now caused more tension in the Middle East than ever before?

As I recalled, Mr. Speaker, our Nation was attacked by some 18 terrorists, 14 Saudi Arabians, one Egyptian, two from the United Arab Emirates, and one Lebanese, on September 11, 2001. None of these terrorists came from Iran or Iraq. Most of them were from Saudi Arabia, and they were members of a terrorist organization that we now know as al Qaeda, and the leader of this terrorist group is Osama bin Laden.

Our Nation was attacked on September 11, 2001. Most of the nations around the world not only sympathized with us but supported us, but the Congress gave authority to our President to go after Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization that was under the protective custody of the Taliban, which at the time controlled Afghanistan and certain parts of Pakistan.

It is critically important, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that our colleagues and the American people need to be reminded on what prompted our President, as Commander in Chief, and this Congress, what actions our Nation took after our country was attacked on September 11, 2001.

Our government leaders properly identified al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden as the perpetrators of the attacks on September 11, 2001, and our President and the Congress acted accordingly to summon our military forces to wage war against Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization that was under the protection of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Well, we got rid of the Taliban, and we were successful in establishing a democratic government for the people and the leaders of Afghanistan, but we did not, and I repeat we did not, complete our mission of either killing or capturing the leader who was responsible for the attack against our country on September 11, 2001.

The terrorist leader's name is Osama bin Laden, and after almost 6 years now, the most powerful country in the world militarily, Osama bin Laden still has not been killed or captured, let alone the fact that we did not complete our commitment in resources and force structure to sustain Afghanistan's newly established democratic government.

Now, there is a new escalation of Taliban presence in Afghanistan and its ability to wage military operations against us and our NATO allies, and the situation in Afghanistan is now becoming more like Iraq, needing more troops and resources to fight the Taliban again.

The critical question of why our country decided to wage war against Saddam Hussein is one that will be a matter of public debate for years to come, but suffice it to say, one, Saddam Hussein did not attack us on September 11, 2001. It was Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization that was based in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan.

Two, our President and his top officials had misled the American people and the Congress to state that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons. I honestly believe that this issue alone was the catalyst and what prompted Congress to give the President military authority to force Saddam Hussein to comply with U.N. resolutions and to also locate and destroy his alleged supply of nuclear weapons.

Three, we may have won the war in Iraq by eventually capturing Saddam Hussein, but we have caused more tension and conflict among the rival factions between the Shiites, comprised of 60 percent of this country's population of 26 million, and the Sunnis, which make up some 20 percent of the population, and the remainder the Kurds which, for the most part, is not involved in this conflict at this point in time.

I must include, Mr. Speaker, the name of former Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki as part of the debate and discussion, if you will. General Shinseki, in my mind, was among the first of our military leaders who, for making an honest statement as a professional soldier concerning the situation in Iraq, was publicly criticized and humiliated by civilian superiors within the Department of Defense.

In response to questions by members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Shinseki was asked how many troops it would require to take control of Iraq, and his response was something in the order of several hundred thousand soldiers. Here was a soldier who fought and was wounded while engaged in combat in Vietnam, a most respected officer who served with honor and distinction for some 35 years in defense of our Nation. Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, I must say, General Shinseki's professional assessment of the mismanagement and ill-planning of this war in Iraq could not have been more accurate, given the sad state of affairs we find our country is in now when dealing with Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us is plain and simple. It is a clear statement to the American people and to the world that Congress absolutely supports the efforts of all the men and women who proudly serve in the Armed Forces of the United States. It also sends a very simple message to President Bush that his recent decision to send an additional number of some 20,000 troops to the war effort in Iraq is not going to change the serious security problems and the civil war that is now in place between the Sunni and the Shiite factions.

Mr. Speaker, we have fulfilled our mission, our military mission, by capturing Saddam Hussein who, of course, now recently was hung by the authorities with the new Iraq Government. It is up to the Iraq people and their leaders now to determine for themselves a political solution to the rights and privileges of the three major factions: the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds.

It is a fact that 60 percent of the population in Iraq is Shiite. Prime Minister Maliki is a Shiite, and interestingly enough, the President is a Kurd.

□ 2020

Now the question is how and in what way the Sunnis are going to be part of this newly established government. And there is no denial, Mr. Speaker, that for the future the new government will be dominated by Shiites, an unintended consequence of our decision to wage war against Saddam Hussein, who was a member of the Sunni faction, which made up only 20 percent of the population of Iraq. But Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and the rest of the Muslim world is Sunni. Eighty-five percent of the Muslim world is Sunni, we have to understand that, and Iran and the Shiite factions in Iraq make up only 15 percent.

I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, and I want to quote again my good friend's quotation from Daniel Webster: God grants liberty to those who love it, but I say they must also be willing to die for it.

The civil war now taking place between the Sunnis and the Shiites is a war not for seeking liberty and freedom, but it is a religious war that has been going on for the past 1,400 years. There are never winners in religious wars, Mr. Speaker. And no force, not even the most powerful nation of this

world is going to change the hearts and minds of the Sunnis and the Shiites unless they themselves do so willingly and do it in a political way.

Mr. Speaker, I honestly believe that our troops now there and an additional number of 20,000 more soldiers that President Bush has ordered for deployment in Iraq are going to get caught in the crossfire of the civil war that is now going on between the Sunnis and the Shiites, a war that can only be resolved only among the Iraqi factions themselves and not with our military presence there.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from New Jersey, my good friend chairman of our Subcommittee in Africa and Global Health, Mr. PAYNE, so that he may be able to control the time on this side of the aisle.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BECERRA). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds to note that the Iraq Study Group specifically said the United States should significantly increase the number of U.S. military personnel, including combat troops embedded in and supporting Iraqi units.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS).

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, as a Vietnam veteran who served three tours during Vietnam and flew 116 combat missions over there in B–52s, I rise to oppose this resolution.

I am sure I don't speak for every Vietnam veteran, but I am sure I speak for a lot of them when I say that when we served in combat we detested the politicians in Washington who undermined our efforts to win, politicians who criticized the war effort, politicians who sought to micro-manage the war, politicians who set the rules of engagement from thousands of miles away.

These politicians were anything but helpful. They undermined our efforts and our morale. They made us fight with one hand tied behind our backs. They demoralized our forces and our allies and our families. And, their words and political efforts grated on our families back home.

Mr. Speaker, it was wrong then and it is wrong now. Our troops need and deserve our full support.

I don't question the proponents of this resolution's patriotism. I question their judgment. What we are debating this week is called a nonbinding resolution. What that really means is that this is nothing more than a political statement. It is designed to send a message to the voters and to the media to score political points, I guess. But this resolution is not about President Bush or failures of his administration, this is about America, it is about our future, it is about our kids and our grandkids. And, unfortunately for them, this resolution offers no plan to win the war, no plan for the future.

For months we have heard the other side criticize the President for offering a stay-the-course strategy in Iraq. Now that the President has offered a new strategy, the other side wants the status quo, to stay the course. The American people want a new direction in Iraq, but not a retreat or a defeat.

This is a stay-the-course resolution. It opposes sending in reinforcements to help achieve victory, as the Iraq Study Group suggested that we do on page 73 of their report.

Now, I am not suggesting that the military is the only solution to winning the Iraq war. It is only one leg in a three-legged stool, which also should include diplomatic, political, economic efforts as well. But it is absolutely an indispensable part of the solution. To undermine the military effort is wrong and will guarantee defeat.

The left wants us to fight a politically correct war. They believe that if we stop fighting the war will end. They are wrong.

Some of us met with ambassadors from the Middle East yesterday. The ambassadors voiced strong opposition to withdrawing troops from Iraq. They said to do so before the Iraqi Government is able to sustain itself would lead to catastrophe, catastrophe in Iraq and catastrophe in the region. They are right. If we stop fighting, the consequence will be disastrous. Our terrorist enemies will be greatly emboldened and empowered. Countless Iraqis will be slaughtered. Genocide will occur. The terrorists will become even a bigger threat to the region, destabilizing and possibly igniting a regional war, and they will surely follow us home to fight here. And our allies will never trust our resolve again.

If we don't defeat the Islamic terrorists in Iraq, then let me ask you, where will we do so?

Mr. Speaker, the world is watching the Pelosi Congress. Will we show them that our determination to succeed is stronger than the terrorists? If this war is lost, it won't be lost by our magnificent troops in the field, it will be lost in the Halls of this Congress by politicians who want to micromanage our military. And that is why I ask my colleagues to consider the consequences of this vote and this war.

The long-term consequences are momentous. What will it mean for your kids and grandkids? What kind of world will they inherit? What will it mean for the Middle East? What will it mean for our allies in the Middle East? What will it mean for the future of our great country?

Make no mistake about this. This resolution will harm our troops who are sacrificing for the cause of freedom. It opposes sending in reinforcements to troops in battle. Our troops deserve and need our support. The arm chair generals in Congress who have never served in combat say, We will not abandon you, while they undermine our troops and their mission, while they deny them reinforcements.

This vote is a vote for failure in Iraq and chaos. We should insist on victory in Iraq. This resolution does not support victory, it supports failure. We must defeat the terrorists, we must protect America from Islamic terrorists. Defeat this resolution.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the gentleman from New York, Representative ED TOWNS.

Mr. TOWNS. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding time to me, and to say that I thank the leadership of this House. I thank Speaker NANCY PELOSI and I thank IKE SKELTON for bringing this resolution forward.

You know, I served in the military, and I have great admiration and respect for the military, and I also cannot understand why people are saying that if you support this resolution you are not supporting the troops. I can't make that connection because I support the troops, but I must admit I also support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, 4 years have passed since this administration began its illfated war in Iraq. No weapons of mass destruction have been found, no coalition of nations has fought in the war, and the American people are still waiting for a plan for a real war against terrorism.

Though Saddam Hussein is now dead, this fact alone has not been worth nearly $400 billion in taxpayer funds, the loss of 3,000 lives, and 26,000 casualties. What message does this send to the American people? I have been hearing this all day long coming from the minority side.

Let me tell you what the message is that we are sending to the American people: That our priorities are upside down, and we need to fix them.

□ 2030

I have opposed this war from the very beginning, because I was concerned that we would come to this point where we would spend all the money on the war and not have the resources to do the things to keep our Nation and to make our Nation strong.

Almost all the speakers on the other side expressed their support for the troops. I want you to know that on this side we also express our support for the troops. This administration has asked us to cut funding for children, for children's health insurance. We were asked to cut critical funds for Medicaid and Medicare, a loss of dollars that may cripple our public health system. Many of our hospitals are actually closing, and we are asked to provide token funding so No Child Left Behind becomes ''most children now are left behind.''

This war and its budgetary requirements are squeezing the American people, and I say that enough is enough. But, no, the administration is asking

for 20,000 more combat troops and approximately 15,000 support troops. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will cost approximately $13 billion.

This administration has had troop surges in the past; this is not new. What is different about this troop surge? It is more of the same, just more targets we are sending.

In October, the administration sent more combat troops into Baghdad to attempt to end the growing violence; however, the violence in Baghdad has only grown worse. Now the United States military is caught up in a very violent civil war, something they are neither trained nor equipped to deal with. Sending additional troops to Iraq actually makes things worse for Iraqi civilians and for our troops.

Our military is already stretched too thin. Many soldiers are doing two and three and four tours of duty. The administration now plans to send additional troops into a city almost the size of New York City, and they may have to go house to house in order to keep warring sides from killing each other.

What message does this send to the American people when we tell them we have no more money for children's health insurance, no more money for Medicaid, no more money for Medicare, no more money for senior programs and no more money for children's education? And how do you think the American people will react to more fatalities and more wounded? How long will Congress keep supporting a war that has nothing to do with ending terrorism?

I ask the question tonight, how long will this administration keep ignoring the real needs of the American people? It is time for America to withdraw from Iraq and focus on the real business of the American people: better health care, more jobs, education for all of our children. We should not send an additional 21,500 troops. That only means we are sending additional targets into the area.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I would say to my good friend from New York, the message this resolution sends to the troops in the field is that the resolution challenges and opposes the mission that their group commander is asking them to carry out, and to me that has to undermine their morale.

Mr. TOWNS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KING of New York. I will yield to the gentleman.

Mr. TOWNS. Let me say to you that I read the resolution, and I don't know how you can arrive at that conclusion.

Mr. KING of New York. Reclaiming my time, the reason I am saying that is, you are opposing the 21,000 troop increase, and that is the policy of General Petraeus, who is the new commander in the field. That is the policy he is asking his troops to carry out, and you are opposing the very policy the new commander says can work and will work.

With that, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. BROWN).

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as President Bush and his top military advisers implement the new plan for victory in Iraq, we must be united in a common goal for victory, and we should never forget that our enemy is listening to this debate, just as our troops are listening to every word of every Member of this Congress.

As many of my colleagues have done, I have personally visited Iraq. I have seen the progress and I have seen the good job that our brave men and women are doing for us and for the people of Iraq.

We have achieved some major accomplishments in Iraq. Women are now able to vote in real elections for the first time in their lives. Iraqi citizens are now able to protest and let their opinions be heard in public, and Iraq is a self-governing nation, free of tyranny.

I was proud to sit down and share a meal with many soldiers from South Carolina's First District. And the question many of our soldiers kept asking me was, why are none of the good stories making it back to the folks at home?

Mr. Speaker, I think that many of us today are trying to share some of the good stories and recognize some of the positive things that our brave men and women in Iraq are doing for us.

South Carolina's First District has a high proportion of active and retired military personnel and are directly impacted by the war in the Middle East. At the Charleston Air Force Base, the C–17 aircraft that come and go are a direct link in the supply chain that assist our brave soldiers fighting for us in Iraq.

At Force Protection in Ladson, South Carolina, they continue to build the Buffalo and the Cougar vehicles that save the lives of our soldiers against the mines and IED attacks every day.

Last year on Memorial Day, in my capacity as chairman of the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health, I was fortunate enough to be the guest speaker at an American cemetery in Normandy, France, which overlooks Omaha Beach.

Our brave soldiers during World War II were in France not to fight the French, but to fight the occupying Nazis. Today our soldiers are not in Iraq and Afghanistan to fight the citizens of those countries, but are there to fight the insurgents in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

In listening to the debate over the past few days, it reminded me of my visit and reading some of the names of the brave soldiers that fought our Nation's war during World War II.

Mr. Speaker, there are over 9,300 buried in Normandy. Those brave souls fought in a war against the forces of evil then, just as our soldiers in Iraq are fighting against the forces of evil today.

What would have happened if Franklin Delano Roosevelt pulled our troops out of France after the casualties we took storming the beaches of Normandy? If Franklin Delano Roosevelt was alive today, what would he think of this debate which empowers and energizes our enemies and demoralizes our brave fighting men and women? What would America have done if the Congress enacted a nonbinding resolution to pull our troops out of France after D–Day? What kind of world would we be living in today?

Iraq is directly tied to the future security of our Nation, and consequently, failure in Iraq is not an option.

I do not believe we have already lost in Iraq, but we will lose if we don't give the troops what they need to win. I remain hopeful that the Democrats and Republicans can unite around a new policy, clearly defining our troops' mission for the sake of our national security.

Mr. Speaker, I support President Bush and his vision for the new strategy for victory in Iraq. I cannot in good faith support this resolution because it sends our soldiers the message that the United States Congress believes that they cannot succeed in their mission. It is much easier to complain, while offering no real ideas or alternatives. This resolution is all bark and no bite.

I will conclude with a quote from a good friend and someone I am proud to have as my constituent, Medal of Honor recipient and retired Major General James Livingston. ''Today we have a choice of fighting the enemy in Iraq. If we do not take them on in Iraq, then we will be forced to fight the enemy here on our homeland.''

Mr. Speaker, I strongly oppose this resolution.

□ 2040

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida, Representative CORRINE BROWN.

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution which requires our support for our brave troops and the American military, yet also expresses disapproval of President Bush's decision to deploy additional troops to the area.

My colleagues, the most serious vote any Member of Congress will ever take will be to send men and women to war. I support the troops 100 percent. Yet when you have your head in the lion's mouth, how do you get it out?

I did not vote for the war when it came before the House of Representatives back in 2002. I never supported

this war. Yet, I do not blame my colleagues who did because their vote was based on false, twisted information provided by President Bush. From the very beginning of this conflict, President Bush has intentionally misled the American public by supplying them with false grounds for going to war, and now he is inventing reasons for us to stay there.

As President Bush begins to lay out his case for expanding this terrible war into Iran, we see the false rhetoric, the same war drumbeats in the background, drumming up support for the attack on Iran. Since we have never found a link between al Qaeda and Iraq, we are trying to hide our failure to control the civil war in Iraq by blaming Iran for supplying weapons to Iraqi insurgents. There is no proof and no one is certain this is under the direction of the Iranian leadership. Again, the President is telling the American people this is true, but why should we believe him? I know what the Bush administration is capable of doing. They will use any means necessary to achieve their ends, even if it means doctoring up the information supplied to Congress and to the international community to wage a war over oil.

They have provided all the justifications, all the sanctimony, frightening the American people into supporting a $600 billion war in Iraq, supposedly to deter terror, but in reality it is having the opposite effect. My colleagues, this war needs to come to an end. The American people want the troops home. This was the message sent loud and clear to the Bush administration during the November elections. Yet they for some reason just didn't get the message. Nearly 70 percent of the American people want us out of Iraq. Yet, President Bush continues to ignore that. We have already spent over half a trillion dollars over there. Let me repeat. $600 billion. There was even a period between 2003 and 2004 when our military was carrying huge wraps of $100 bills over to Iraq.

Look at this cruise ship. I want you to imagine a cruise ship full of $100 bills. We sent it over to Iraq. Now, let me tell you something, folks. A billion dollars is even a lot of money here in Washington. $100 bills, a billion dollars. Let me tell you what that would pay for our veterans. $1.7 billion would fund over 1.5 million veterans in category 8 that we are not funding today. Let me repeat. Over 1.5 million veterans we could serve if we could recoup just $1 billion, and we have sent over about $9 billion that we cannot account for.

Folks, I am going to give the Bush administration an F, and I am going to give the past Congress an F for giving him a blank check.

We all have the opportunity to have a serious vote for our troops and a vote for the American people. I say vote ''yes'' on the resolution.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BECERRA). Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize the fact that, until now, this debate has been, I think, very up-front and I hope we can keep it at that level. I would also say, I wonder if it is the position of the Democratic Party that Iran is not funding and supplying the insurgents in Iraq, because I think that was determined far before President Bush's administration made any comments about it.

With that, I would yield 7 minutes to my distinguished colleague and friend on the Homeland Security Committee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. DENT).

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, this has been a long debate. But two points must be absolutely clear at the outset. First, it is imperative that we continue to support our troops on the ground. Our servicemembers deployed to Iraq have done a magnificent job. They have performed their missions admirably, effectively, and with valor. They have done everything we have asked them to do. They have made sacrifices as have their families. They deserve our unqualified support. And as a Member of Congress, I strongly disagree with some of my colleagues who have suggested cutting off funds for our troops serving in Iraq.

A second point to be made here is that immediate withdrawal from Iraq, which has likewise been advocated by some members on the other side of the aisle, is also a bad idea. The Iraq Study Group has said that ''it would be wrong for the United States to abandon the country through a precipitate withdrawal of troops and support.'' The National Intelligence Estimate of January 2007 says that ''if Coalition forces were withdrawn rapidly during the term of this estimate, we judge that this almost certainly would lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in Iraq.''

Religious conflict aside, there is another reason for avoiding immediate withdrawal, and that is simply that al Qaeda and its affiliated groups still operate in Iraq. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's chief deputy, considers their efforts in Iraq to be ''crucial'' towards furthering al Qaeda objectives in the region. Thus, these groups are aggressively pursuing terrorism within the borders of that country, commiting acts of violence against Shias, Kurds and anyone else who dares to disagree with them.

By instigating this mayhem and bloodshed in Iraq, al Qaeda hopes to realize its supreme goal, to destabilize the government, assume control over the country and its oil wealth and eventually install a Taliban-style government in Baghdad. This is not good for the United States. It is not good for Iraq. And it is not good for the region. That is why I oppose immediate withdrawal.

That being said, and understanding the need for Congress to debate the issue of the war, I am disappointed in the way this debate has taken shape. The majority has given much time for us to express our views, but it has limited the options that might be employed to make this legislation more effective. They allowed no amendments either from Republicans or from their own Democratic colleagues. They refused to permit any substitutes. They even denied us a motion to recommit.

By putting before us this highly restrictive rule, the other side has effectively foreclosed dialogue on other measures that might have added substance to the debate. While both Democrats and Republicans utilize the Iraq Study Group findings to justify their positions, the majority leadership has refused to consider my colleague from Virginia's legislation, Mr. FRANK WOLF, his legislation, H. Con. Res. 45, which would implement some of the most significant recommendations of the Iraq Study Group's report. This legislation would emphasize the need for U.S. forces to accelerate the training of their Iraqi counterparts, would establish milestones for success in Iraq, and would promote diplomatic initiatives in order to advance stability in the country and in the region.

□ 2050

Yet no debate on such a bill and no opportunity to offer an amendment consistent with those objectives was tolerated by the majority. What does this say about their commitment to fulfilling the objectives recommended by the Iraq Study Group's report? You know, we are all speaking about this report, but we are simply not voting on it. That is wrong.

I stand before you today in my second term in Congress as someone who has tried to understand the Iraq war from many different viewpoints. I have talked with my constituents both pro and con about the war. I have listened to military and intelligence briefings. I have visited Iraq. I have studied the Iraq Study Group report. I have read journal articles, academic studies and news clips on the subject, all to increase my professional awareness of what is going on over there.

But I do not just see this from a professional perspective. The Iraq war has had personal consequences for me as well. One of my staffers, Jason Lane, is a Reservist who has been called to active duty and is deployed there right now.

I have talked with the troops who have served there. I have visited the wounded in hospitals and most painfully attended the funerals of those who gave to this country what Abraham Lincoln called the last full measure of devotion. I attended one of those funerals just last Friday.

From all of this, I must admit, I have my concerns about the efficacy of the President's troop surge. I believe that it is far more important that the Iraqis

show the political will to achieve reconciliation and end the sectarian violence that is slowly but surely strangling their capital and their country.

As their Prime Minister, Maliki said on November 27, 2006, ''The crisis is political, and ones who can stop the cycle of aggravation and the bloodletting of innocents are the politicians.''

Success in Iraq is essential to achieving America's foreign policy objectives, and it is in America's best interest to ensure that Iraq can sustain, govern and defend itself. But I believe in holding Prime Minister Maliki to his word. We cannot and will not abandon our troops who are currently on the ground in Iraq.

We must make sure that our forces effectively engage al Qaeda, as opposed to mediating a Sunni-Shia conflict that is the responsibility of the Iraqi government to resolve. We all know these are the challenges facing this Congress, and these are challenges that must be met in a bipartisan manner.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND).

Mr. KIND. I thank my friend for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I do rise in support of the resolution before us. It is a very simple and straightforward resolution. It expresses our support and gratitude to our troops and our disapproval with the President's escalation plan in Iraq. I have believed for some time now that we are in desperate need of a new direction and not an escalation in Iraq.

It is not like we are confronted with a new plan by the President here today. We have tried three troop surges in the last 2 years alone, without the desired result. I don't know what the President sees or hears today that leads him to believe that the fourth time is a charm.

No, from the beginning, this has been the wrong war at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. We now know that Saddam Hussein did not, in fact, possess weapons of mass destruction. He had no involvement in the attacks on September 11. He had no links with al Qaeda. I believe then, as I do today, that while he may have been potentially dangerous, he was eminently containable.

But I too must share some responsibility for having supported the Iraq resolution in the fall of 2002. I did so while believing the President when he stated that the goal was disarmament and not regime change, that war would be a last resort and not a convenient option, that he would work through the U.N. Security Council and with the international community rather than taking unilateral action.

But I also believed that it was important at that time to get weapons inspection teams back in Iraq to search for weapons and to keep an eye on Saddam so he didn't develop capability to do harm. I also believe that we could not accomplish that goal without a threat of credible force hanging over Saddam's head.

When, in fact, we did accomplish it and got inspection teams back in with unfettered access, I was sitting through administration briefings asking them if we were cooperating with them and directing them to suspected sites. Of course we were, they said, but they are not finding anything.

That is when that pit in my stomach first formed, that perhaps Saddam did what he said he did all along, and that is disarm. That is when I, along with my friend and colleague, SHERROD BROWN, drafted a letter signed by 150 of our colleagues in January of 2003 asking the President to give the inspection teams time to do their job and not rush in because they were not finding anything.

But instead of heeding our advice, he ordered the inspection teams out, sent our troops in with insufficient forces to secure the peace, with no plan for the day after, with no clear objectives and with no exit strategy, all contrary to the Powell Doctrine. Now we are where we are today with over $500 billion already spent, over 3,000 lives lost, over 23,000 injured who have returned home. And we are faced with no good options.

Yes, we do need a new direction and not an escalation. It is time for us to turn over responsibility for security to the Iraqi people so we can begin a redeployment of our forces, first within the country, let us get them off the front lines and off the main streets of Baghdad, where they can still play a support role, but which could also lead to a redeployment eventually out of country. We can then refocus our energies on the real national security threat, and that is dismantling the al Qaeda global network that we face, making sure we don't lose Afghanistan, making sure the Taliban doesn't reconstitute themselves and making sure that we bring those who are directly responsible for September 11 to justice, like Osama bin Laden, who is still at large and roaming free today. Ultimately, this conflict cannot be solved militarily, but only by tough political compromises between the Sunnis, Shia and Kurds. We cannot do this for them.

We also need to get the Arab League involved, because they can help with reconstruction, they can help with security, and they can help add legitimacy to the Iraqi government. It is not in their interest to see the Sunni-Shia conflict spread outside of the Iraq borders and sweep the region, which is a very real threat today. Nor is it in Iran and Syria's interests to be on the opposite sides of a civil war that may break out in Iraq. That is what a plan, a new direction should look like, one that we should be pursuing, rather than just more of the same, stay the course.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity on three occasions to visit our military command and our troops in the field in Iraq. I also visited our troops during the height of our military engagement in the Balkans. Nothing has made me prouder to be an American than seeing our troops in action, because they are so very good. They are well motivated, they are well trained. They are the best our Nation has to offer.

I have had 18 military funerals in my Congressional district alone, most of which I personally attended. If I don't have to attend another military funeral, if I don't have to pick up the phone to call another grieving family, I will be one of the happiest people in the world. They are a constant reminder of the human toll this is having, not only with our troops but with their families and our communities. There is not a day that goes by when I am not concerned about the safety and welfare of our troops.

That is exactly why we should be debating this resolution, because it is imperative that war is a last resort, that we as policymakers do everything we can to get the policy right because of the impact it has on our troops, their family, and our communities. It is important that we give them a mission with which they can succeed.

It is time to stop asking our troops to babysit a civil war. It is time to ask the Iraqis to stand up. It is time to support this resolution and give the President a clear indication of where this Congress stands.

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

Before yielding to the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. DEAL, I would just like to comment on my colleague from Wisconsin and say to have lost 18 of his constituents is heart wrenching, and I know that his statement is heartfelt.

But, in fact, we are involved in the Arab League. We have involved five of the states surrounding, and every one of the ambassadors from this Arab League said, we didn't want you to go in, but you cannot leave.

I would just say to the gentleman as well that we asked, critics asked you and others for a new team and a new plan. You have a new team, and you do have a new plan. The new plan is not the surge in troops. The new plan is coming into the neighborhoods in Baghdad with Iraqis, embedded American troops, cleaning them up, and holding them.

Mr. KIND. Will the gentleman yield for a brief comment?

Mr. SHAYS. A brief comment.

Mr. KIND. I was at the same meeting and I heard the same message from the ambassadors in the region. No one here is advocating an immediate withdrawal, just a different direction and a different strategy rather than what has failed in the past.

Mr. SHAYS. Reclaiming my time, what we do have is a new plan, and it is not the surge, it is cleaning up the neighborhoods and holding them with Iraqi troops embedded with American troops.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL).

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this resolution, and I

readily admit that I don't know for sure what the best policy is in this fight against radical Islamic groups. With all due respect, I don't think any other Member of this body does either. Much of what we have heard this week are words based on emotions, and not facts.

In the midst of such uncertainty, I do believe there are certain opinions that are factually sound. Number one, the greatest weapon our enemy has is the loss of resolve on the part of the American people. Two, what this Congress does significantly affects that resolve of the American people. Three, this resolution is a major signal that America has lost its resolve.

If we succumb to an attitude of defeat, then defeat is what will occur. I will simply ask, if we don't want to engage radical Islam in Iraq, then where? If we don't want to engage radical Islam now, then when?

□ 2100

If we cannot answer these questions, be assured that our enemy will provide us with the answers. I am not willing to vote for a resolution that I believe does just that. It is true that the Iraqis must truly step forward and want to govern themselves. President Bush has set out markers by which they will be measured. We should hold them to these reasonable standards.

Tonight I stand with our troops, and I thank them and their families for their service.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky, a member of the Appropriations Committee (Mr. CHANDLER).

Mr. CHANDLER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from New Jersey for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, as we debate this resolution on Iraq, we are reminded of the uncertain world in which we live. While the 5-year anniversary of 9/11 has passed, the memories of that day are still with us, as are the actions of this administration that led us into this war.

Following 9/11, our country missed an important opportunity that will forever change our history. Instead of building coalitions and using that support to maximize our strength, we alienated much of the world. We lost sight of the simple truth: A respected America is a more secure America.

But this administration insisted on going it alone in Iraq. They refused to let U.N. inspectors complete their work, and they launched an invasion without the support of the international community. We are now faced with lasting repercussions of that decision. And it appears the President still has not learned from that mistake.

Once again, the President is going it alone with his call for more than 20,000 additional troops in Iraq. He does not have the support of the international community, and he has lost the support of many in the military, the Congress, and, most importantly, the American people.

I fear, Mr. Speaker, the President is once again missing an important opportunity. He is missing his chance to send a strong message to the Iraqi people that we will no longer police their civil war, and that it is time for them to assume responsibility for their own country so that our troops can be removed from harm's way.

In my judgment, this war is beyond the scope of our men and women in uniform. The situation in Iraq is in dire need of a diplomatic solution. Sure, we need to be ready to take down al Qaeda training camps in the region, but we do not need to be refereeing age-old religious disputes.

This is an untenable situation and unfair to our brave troops who have become targets of insurgents. If we are going to support our troops in every way possible, it is vital that we not only support them with the supplies and armor that they need, we must also ensure that they are being deployed in such a way that they have a realistic chance of success. We must make certain that the funds we are sending to Iraq are going to our troops and not into the pockets of no-bid contractors and war profiteers.

Mr. Speaker, I support this resolution, because I support our men and women in uniform. I have heard speakers on the other side say that this debate will demoralize our troops. Well, I submit that nothing can demoralize our troops more than having them police a civil war. And that is what this administration is asking them to do.

All of us in this body believe in the spread of democracy and freedom. But that grand responsibility cannot solely rest on the shoulders of our troops. It must rest on the shoulders of free nations across this world. And it must rest on the shared sacrifice of all citizens of this country.

No doubt we have real enemies. They are the Islamist jihadists, and they must be opposed. These same enemies are shared by all free nations. But escalating the war in Iraq is not the right approach to defeat the jihadists. It is an approach that will cost more American lives and mire us even further in the Iraqi civil war.

We can win the long-term struggle if we are smart, if we focus on the real enemy, if we build our alliances properly, and if we do not let our own pride get in the way.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I would say to supporters of the resolution that General Petraeus himself, in answer to a question from Senator LIEBERMAN, he said that resolutions such as this will affect the morale of the troops that he has been asked to lead in battle.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS).

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution. What this debate is really all about is whether you wish to make a statement in support of our new strategy in Iraq or whether you oppose this new plan.

By simply supporting this resolution, you are saying you want to leave Iraq as soon as possible. I am not willing to do this. I am willing to support the administration and to give our military and our troops the benefit of the doubt, and I will vote against this resolution because I want to give this new strategy a chance, a simple chance to succeed.

My colleagues, let me repeat. If you vote for this resolution, then you are saying you do not wish to give the military and General Petraeus a chance to succeed. In fact, this resolution declares the new strategy in Iraq is a failure before it has even had a chance to be implemented.

This is inconsistent with the unanimous vote the Senate gave to the man selected to carry out this strategy, General Petraeus. Everyone agrees he is the best man. This resolution is undercutting the general and our troops at the very time they need our support.

Now, many will argue that there has been ample opportunity to succeed and that we have failed at this point. Certainly mistakes have been made and a change of strategy is long overdue. However, what should this strategy be? Should the U.S. immediately pull out of Iraq, leaving the terrorists emboldened and potentially put more Americans at risk?

The advocates for this resolution have no answer. In fact, they beg the very question, What happens when we leave? What happens in Iraq if we leave precipitously? And what do we do if it turns into a Middle East conflagration?

If Shiite Iran succeeds in exerting its influence through Shiite Iraq, it will threaten to spill over the sectarian violence across the Middle East and elsewhere. Now here is how the head of the Arab League views this potential conflict. This is what he said. ''If this happens we will enter hell itself.''

The supporters of the resolution keep talking about the past, but they do not talk about the future and how we are going to solve this problem without creating a more serious problem.

Edmund Burke, the great conservative leader from Britain, this is how he put it: It is not a question of how we got into this situation, but how do we get out. They have no answers, and by not answering this latter question they are begging the question.

Now, this is circular reasoning. It is one in which a premise presupposes the conclusion in some way. In a course of logic, this is called the core relative. So this resolution is faulty reasoning.

□ 2110

Any professor of logic would simply recognize the false choice. We need this new strategy that General Petraeus is implementing so that we can hand over this country to the constitutionally elected government. My colleagues, this can be done and will be done soon one way or the other.

Any new strategy must be accompanied by a set of strategic benchmarks designed to measure progress in Iraq and to hold the administration and the Iraqi Government accountable for their role in achieving this success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask to include in the RECORD a list of these benchmarks that I recommend be part of this new strategy to allow our troops to come home.

Why not consider a resolution that incorporates these benchmarks?

But I do offer a warning to the administration. We must have benchmarks that demonstrate our progress in Iraq. I, for one, and many others, cannot support continued funding without measurable benchmarks. And we need to know if we are making progress; and if we are not, then we can employ other tactics and different measures, all of which will lead to the Iraqi Government taking on the responsibility for their own country.

My colleagues, the political easy thing to do is to vote for this faulty resolution because you are not willing to give a final chance for success and you have no ideas on achieving success. The harder, political vote is ''no,'' and that is what I intend to do.

If I have a few more moments, I just want to bring to my colleagues' attention a quote that has been declassified from bin Laden's deputy. And if you will bear with me and follow this quote. ''It is my humble opinion that the jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals: The first stage, expel the Americans from Iraq; the second stage, establish Islamic authority, and then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate; the third stage, extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Iran; the fourth stage, it may coincide with what came before, the clash with Israel because Israel was established only to challenge a new Islamic entity.''

My colleagues, that is what is at stake. The war in Iraq is a central front in the global war on terrorism and a central battleground for Islamic militant extremists in this worldwide mission to simply destroy all Western democracy. And you don't have to take my word for it. You can see this declassified deputy to bin Laden, his opinion.

Mr. Speaker, I will vote against this resolution. While no proposal guarantees success, a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. support would guarantee failure. The stakes are too high to fail in Iraq. It remains in America's strategic interests to ensure regional stability in the Middle East and to deny terrorists a safe haven in Iraq.

Certainly mistakes have been made and a change of strategy is long overdue. However, what should this change of strategy be? Should the U.S. immediately pull out of Iraq, leave the terrorists emboldened and potentially put more Americans at risk? Or do we need a new strategy to win the war and finish the job? I think the latter.

Instead of a politically motivated resolution, my colleagues and I have developed a strategy for victory in Iraq. We need to establish measurable benchmarks for success in Iraq while expressing unwavering support for our troops.

Any new strategy must be accompanied by a set of strategic benchmarks designed to measure progress in Iraq and to hold the Bush administration and the Iraqi Government accountable for their role in achieving success. Threatening to reduce the future commitment of American troops and economic aid if they are not implemented, we must enforce these benchmarks. It is important to stress that an open-ended American military commitment is both unwise and dangerous. In the business world, no successful enterprise gives enormous sums of money without accountability, and nor should we.

The military benchmarks I would like to see utilized include:

Measuring the level of Iraqi government cooperation with the U.S. Military;

Iraqi progress in removing terrorists and others from its own security forces;

Identifying the level of combat experience for all Iraqi Army battalions; and

Tracking the expenditure of funds supporting Iraqi defense forces.

The political benchmarks include:

Advancing a strategy to promote tolerance and co-existence among Iraqis;

Providing fair access to all Iraqi resources;

Promoting the rule of law;

Reforming the judicial system to ensure equal application of the law; and

Measuring cooperation and coordination of neighboring countries in stabilizing Iraq.

Why not consider a resolution that incorporates these benchmarks?

This resolution sends an inappropriate message to our troops. This resolution declares the new strategy in Iraq a failure before it even has the chance to be implemented. This is inconsistent with the unanimous vote the other body gave to the man designated to carry the strategy out, General Petraeus. Congress is undercutting General Petraeus and our troops at the very time they need our support.

As cochair of the Congressional Air Force Caucus, I joined in leading a delegation of members to Iraq. This trip provided valuable insight into our operations and conditions on the ground. The situation in Iraq poses multiple problems—Sunni al Qaeda terrorists, committed Baathists who are largely Sunni, Shiite militias, and Shiite interference from Iran. This is truly an unholy brew.

The war in Iraq is a central front in the global war on terrorism and a central battleground for Islamist militant extremists in their worldwide mission to destroy democracy. But don't take my word for it. Take the words from a declassified letter from bin Laden's deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri.

It is my humble opinion that the Jihad in Iraq requires several incremental goals: The first stage: Expel the Americans from Iraq. The second stage: Establish an Islamic authority . . . then develop it and support it until it achieves the level of a caliphate . . . The third stage: Extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq. The fourth stage: It may coincide with what came before: the clash with Israel, because Israel was established only to challenge any new Islamic entity.

These Islamic extremists view victory in Iraq as paramount to their establishment of a worldwide Islamic kingdom. Here is what Osama bin Laden has to say about Iraq from a 2006 audiotape—''The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate rule. Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all their wars and a beginning to the receding of their Zionist-Crusader tide against us.''

Sectarian violence rages in Iraq, fanned by Iran and Syria, and this could well spill over throughout the region. Look at these charts. They show the sectarian divide in Iraq among Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds; and the other shows the regional divide between Sunnis and Shiites.

If Shiite Iran succeeds in exerting its influence through Shiite Iraq, it will threaten the spillover of sectarian violence throughout the Middle East and elsewhere. Here is how Amr Mousa, head of the Arab League, views this potential Iranian-backed Shiite conflict with the Sunni nations—''We will enter hell itself.''

The Islamist terrorist threat is real and directly connected to defeating the insurgents in Iraq. Democrat plans to abandon Iraq will not make this threat disappear.

America cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past by withdrawing from a direct confrontation with radical Islamist terrorists. They will continue to intensify their attacks against America, just as they did following other attacks such as in:

1979: 66 American diplomats taken hostage and held in Iran for 444 days.

1983: A truck bomb kills 241 marines at their barracks in Beirut.

1988: Pan Am 103 bombing kills 270, including 189 Americans, over Lockerbie, Scotland.

1993: Six killed in first World Trade Center bombing by militant Islamic terrorists.

1996: 19 U.S. service members are killed in Khobar Towers bombing.

1998: 225 people killed in bombings at the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

2000: Al Qaeda's attack on the destroyer USS. *Cole* kills 17 American sailors.

2001: Al Qaeda hijackers fly planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, while passengers force a fourth to crash in Pennsylvania. Total number killed: 2,973.

It is vital that we succeed in Iraq for these reasons: A stable Iraq dedicated to the rule of law will weaken extremism in the Middle East; we cannot allow terrorists to gain a safe haven in that nation; and curbing Iran's regional ambitions.

But I do offer a warning. We must have benchmarks that demonstrate our progress in Iraq. I for one cannot support continued funding without measurable benchmarks and we need to know if we are making progress. If we are not, then we can take other tactics and different measures. All of which will lead to the Iraqi Government taking on the responsibility for their own country.

In conclusion Mr. Speaker, one thing is for certain: The men and women fighting in Iraq must never be used as a political tool. They deserve our unmitigated support. They do not deserve political posturing. We must continue to provide the troops with the support they need to be safe and successful. I urge all my colleagues to oppose this resolution and seek a real resolution that includes military, political, and social benchmarks for success.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would just like to mention, logic was mentioned, and I recall in studying logic, with the square of opposition, that you

do not do something over and over again and come out with a different conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MOORE), a member of the Budget and Financial Services Committee.

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in support of the resolution.

I wrote to the President on May 24 of last year and told the President in this letter: Mr. President, I voted for the use of force resolution based upon what later proved to be flawed intelligence about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

I am glad Saddam Hussein is gone. He was a vicious dictator who killed thousands and thousands of innocent people. At that time, in May of last year, there were 2,400 dead Americans as a result of our intervention in Iraq. Now there are more than 3,100 dead Americans, 700 more than just 9 months ago.

We have done militarily all we can do in Iraq. We need to ask and tell the Iraqi Government, this new Iraqi Government, to step up to the plate and assume responsibility for the protection of their people and their country, Iraq. We need to give them incentive, powerful incentive to step up to the plate and assume responsibility.

Sometimes new governments are like some people. If you tell them you will do something for them, they stand back and let you do it and do it and do it and never, never assume responsibility.

We saved the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein, but we can't save the Iraqi people from the Iraqi people if they won't put aside centuries of religious differences and support their new government. I am talking about the Shia and the Sunnis for more than 1,000 years have been fighting.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read an e-mail I received from a constituent last week. This is from a young lady who is serving presently in Iraq.

''I am a soldier currently deployed to Iraq. Our company is on the verge of an extension. Although we all are proud to serve our country, we also want to go home. Most of us have been gone from home for over a year. If or when we get extended, we wouldn't have seen our families for almost 2 years.

''With the news of the possible extension, the soldiers' morale went down. The families at home are stressed and that can and will stress a soldier out. Some soldiers had to go home on emergency leave because their families are falling apart.

''We watch the news here all the time and most of the time we can't believe what we hear and see. We see soldiers dying left and right, but what are they dying for? Most of us don't even know what we are over here fighting for anymore.

''I guess I just wanted to tell the side of a soldier because no one else will do it.''

And I say to Mr. President, please listen to Congress. Please listen to the American people, and please listen to these soldiers.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BECERRA). The Chair would once again remind Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I would just comment on the remarks of my good friend, the gentleman from Kansas, as to troops that he has heard from. I know I have visited Iraq a number of times. I visit Reserves, National Guard, regular troops, active duty, and I have never seen morale higher in any Armed Forces.

I speak with troops when they come home to my district. I go to the wakes and funerals of those who die from my district. And I think we can pick and choose as to what we say. I would say the overwhelming majority I have spoken to do support and know exactly why they are there.

But again, I just lost a constituent the other day. His family certainly is honored by his service. It was his third tour. He went back for a third tour. So he certainly understood what was going on.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlelady from Tennessee, a member of the Homeland Security Committee (Mrs. BLACKBURN).

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, as I rise I do want to say a special thank you to our troops who are deployed tonight, to those that are from Tennessee's Seventh Congressional District, many of those from Fort Campbell, and our National Guardsmen, our Reservists, certainly to our veterans.

I can think of no more wonderful gift to give those and to leave for those you love than the gift of freedom. And certainly, on Valentine's Day, on Valentine's evening that is an important, important thought for us to have. And I appreciate all of our men and women and the efforts that they make to keep this Nation free, and to be certain that our children and our grandchildren have the opportunity to grow up in freedom and to enjoy the America that we have enjoyed.

As we have talked about this resolution, the 97 words that exist in this very short resolution, we have talked about it from different angles, how a nonbinding resolution and a no confidence resolution affects our troops, the thoughts that went into creating this resolution. And one of the questions that I continually come back to that actually was posed to me by some of the veterans in my district, is whose side are you on? When you offer a resolution like this, whose side are you on?

And the other question that keeps coming back is who are you listening to?

Certainly, I would hope that we would all be standing on the side of freedom. I would hope that we would all be standing on the side of our troops. And I do hope that we would all be listening to our commanders in the field.

There has been some mention this evening of General David Petraeus, who this weekend took control of command in Iraq. And I will give you some of his quotes, some of the things that he has had to say in the last few days as he is over there and working those. And I quote from him. ''Our job in the months ahead, supporting and working with Iraqi forces, will improve our security so that the Iraqi Government can resolve the tough issues it faces, and so that the economy and basic services can be improved. These tasks are achievable. This mission is doable.''

□ 2120

Indeed, those on the ground believe this is doable. We know that it is doable, and we know in the global war on terror we have to win. We cannot lose. We have to win. The civilized world depends on defeating terrorists and winning.

We also know that Iraqis are making progress. There has been some debate and some mention tonight about progress not being made in Iraq. And, Mr. Speaker, I will offer to you that indeed you are not going to hear this on the 6 o'clock news, the 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock news around the country because the major media outlets just don't want to report it. But we are finding out that while this body sets aside a political debate that some think will benefit them, what we see is our troops in the field in Iraq are making progress. They understand their mission. They know what they are about every day. We see that even just in the last few days, when you are talking about Baghdad, three Iraqi Army brigades are now deploying to Baghdad to reinforce the six Iraqi Army brigades and nine National Police brigades that are already there. These are steps that are taking place. This is progress that the Iraqi people are making on behalf of their quest for freedom. These are their steps, these are their steps toward freedom and toward leadership.

How dare we discount that? How dare we not recognize that? How dare we not encourage that? And how dare we take steps to embolden and encourage the enemy who would seek to strike them down?

Mr. Speaker, we should be very, very careful whom we listen to, and we should be very thoughtful as we answer the question, Whose side are you on?

I am so grateful, Mr. Speaker, that those that have gone before us chose to be on the side of freedom.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the Iraqis are deciding now to start to defend themselves. I think it is wonderful. I wish it had happened a number of years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5¼ minutes to the gentlewoman from South Dakota, a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, Representative Stephanie Herseth.

Ms. HERSETH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join so many other proud and patriotic Members of this body, including a number of our military veterans, in support of this bipartisan resolution.

Just over a year ago when I was in Iraq on my second trip to the region, I shared the optimism and the assessment of many that, following three consecutive elections in 2005 with increasing turnout among Iraqi voters in each, 2006 would be a key transitional year militarily, politically, and economically.

However, a year ago this month, the sectarian strife in Iraq began to worsen, and our inadequate planning for possible and likely scenarios that could unfold in this war continued to catch up with us and continued to narrow our strategic options. As initial and important political developments did eventually unfold throughout last summer, sectarian violence did not abate but intensified, particularly in Baghdad. In response, U.S. forces were part of as many as four different efforts to enhance security in the capital in order to ease the path toward further essential political compromise. None of these efforts proved successful because of the limitations of the Iraqi security forces and police and the restrictions imposed by Iraqi Government leaders.

I had serious concerns when the President proposed last month to increase the number of troops in Iraq, and I hold them still today. I have serious concerns regarding the ability of Iraqi security forces not only to act as a reliable partner in the efforts to secure Baghdad, but to take on and maintain the lead in such efforts, concerns echoed in the most recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq.

I have serious concerns regarding whether this plan is sufficiently different from previous efforts to secure the Iraqi capital, particularly when Prime Minister al-Maliki's initial proposal presented to the President in December did not envision additional U.S. troops as part of the effort. I have serious concerns about the further erosion of the commitment of our coalition partners and other allies, if indeed Iraq is the central front of our battle against terrorism.

Now, there is no doubt that al Qaeda in Iraq and elsewhere poses a real and serious threat to our security in the Middle East and to our national security here at home. But the security situation in Iraq has evolved to include a complex civil war, described as ''a self-sustaining intersectarian struggle'' by the NIE, for which additional U.S. troops should not be on the front line to resolve.

The Iraqi Government needs to understand they are on borrowed time and they must take greater control of the future of their own country through political reconciliation to quell the sectarian violence. Iraq's neighbors and the international community must be more engaged diplomatically to end the sectarian strife so as to prevent the spread of it and the instability in the region that would result.

Moreover, as recent oversight hearings have revealed, such a large escalation of both combat and support troops undoubtedly will have an impact on our overall military readiness. And despite their unwavering commitment to serve when called, there may be serious consequences for National Guard and Reservists, as redeployments of full units will be required to implement the troop surge, according to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

So after carefully reviewing the President's proposal to increase the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, hearing testimony from senior members of the military, and analyzing the public statements of combatant commanders, and speaking with many of those from my home State of South Dakota who have served or who have loved ones who are serving in the war on terror, I conclude we should not stay this course. I remain unconvinced that sending additional troops to Iraq is the best way forward. Some who support the escalation have described it as ''our last best chance to win.'' To me, that is a clear acknowledgment that the President's plan further narrows rather than expands our strategic options.

And let me add this: This is an issue that demands a bipartisan approach, and it is most unfortunate that the administration has made a decision that dismisses the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. I believe this bipartisan, narrowly crafted resolution reflects the public's and Congress' assessment that increasing our military's combat role, especially in the midst of an intensifying sectarian struggle, is not the answer.

For those who would attack this limited resolution and the debate surrounding it or to suggest and ask, Whose side are you on, I would refer them to the comments of Secretary Gates from his testimony in the House Armed Services Committee last week in which he said that the troops are ''sophisticated enough to understand that . . . the debate's really about . . . the path forward in Iraq. They understand that the debate is being carried on by patriotic people who care about them and who care about their mission.''

Lastly, I want to reemphasize the first part of today's important resolution. Congress and the American people will continue to support and protect members of the U.S. Armed Forces who are serving or who have served bravely and honorably in Iraq. We have a new generation of veterans returning from Iraq. As a subcommittee Chair on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I will work with all of my colleagues to ensure that the tens of thousands of young people coming home, some after their second, third, and fourth tours, many with severe and debilitating physical and mental wounds, return to the democracy which they fought to protect, with a government that recognizes their service and sacrifice with more than just words of gratitude, but with action that fulfills our Nation's collective duty and obligation to them as veterans who take their place alongside the other fighting men and women who have kept America free and safe.

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I was remiss before in not commending the gentleman from New Jersey on his knowledge of logic and philosophy. I should have known he would get us on that one.

With that, I also note that the Iraq Study Group said that the United States should significantly increase the number of U.S. military personnel, including combat troops.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Indiana, a member of the Homeland Security Committee (Mr. SOUDER).

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I thank our leader from the Homeland Security Committee for yielding.

No congressional decision is more difficult than a vote related to war, and this vote is no different. It is especially difficult when you disagree with the President of your own political party.

I voted to support this war because I believe Iraq presented a direct threat to the United States. Iraq had, was developing, and was attempting to develop weapons of mass destruction.

□ 2130

Iraq was, at a minimum, cooperating with the funding and harboring of terrorists committed to our destruction. Saddam Hussein was repeatedly defying U.N. resolutions, contesting no-fly zones and blocking WMD inspectors. Our intelligence estimates, never 100 percent accurate, in any case, apparently overstated the immediate risk.

But the basic facts remain the same. Knowing what we know now, perhaps we could have waited another 6 to 12 months, which would have given us valuable time to solidify position in Afghanistan. But the decision to go to war was still the right decision, just possibly premature.

I would not have supported this war had the initial selling point been a goal of establishing democracy in Iraq. Advancing freedom has always been an ideological goal of our Nation ever since our founding. We have long supported, from the days of Jefferson and Monroe, the causes of dissident freedom fighters. We did this in occupied Eastern Europe, in Saddam's Iraq and Soviet-occupied Afghanistan.

But there is a difference between aiding people fighting for freedom and doing most of the fighting for them. I stated from the beginning that after removing the direct threat of the Saddam government, it would be in our national security interests if a republican form of government, a unity government respecting the rights of others, could be established in Iraq. If this government of diverse Iraqis could prevail,

it would be a model for the entire region. We needed to give them a chance for self-governance. But, and this is a big qualifier, it would ultimately be their decision, not ours.

On the news we often see Iraqis saying that Americans need to do this or that to provide security. Men and women from Fort Wayne and the rest of Indiana and America can do most of the fighting for the freedom of Iraq only for so long. It is the Iraqis' country.

We should have known this would not be easy. It is self-evident that democracy in the Muslim world is not common now nor in the past. A little bit hubris and more humility when we sent our soldiers into this conflict would have been helpful. This is not just hindsight. For example, the distinguished senior Senator from Indiana, Senator RICHARD LUGAR, raised concerns over and over again that preplanning was insufficient.

Certain basic arguments being made by the administration are simply not accurate. To insist that the war in Iraq is not a civil war when the entire world and the Americans all understand that it is, continues to undermine the credibility of those who make it.

From the beginning, it had elements of a civil war. The Sunnis had persecuted the majority Shia as well as the Kurds. Vengeance was inevitable. The United States correctly demanded that the sectarian militias be eliminated from the Iraqi national police and the military. I, like many other Members, was asked by the administration to deliver such messages to Iraqi government officials during my visits to Iraq.

Our government knew full well that a civil war was going on, even among people we selected to run the government. We had hoped that the early smaller scale civil war could be countered by a strong central government. It is now a large scale civil war, eroding the already limited power of the Iraqi Government. It is now absurd to deny it is a civil war.

Making exaggerated statements of progress in Iraq also does not pass the basic credibility test. While we have made sporadic progress, a school or a project here and there, it is apparent to any Member of Congress who visited Iraq a number of years ago and again recently visited that security has deteriorated.

Baby boomer Americans especially tend to see everything as Vietnam. A government that denies basic realities has little hope of persuading even its friends. We want our government to tell the truth, pleasant or not. These facts are foundational to the fundamental question currently before us.

It is not whether a surge can root out terrorists. Our brave men and women can do this in door-to-door bloody combat, if necessary, and we may be able with extra troops to stabilize some areas temporarily. But then what? The President has also said that unlike past efforts, this time we will hold our gains. With whom? With what?

This is the basic underlying issue. Assuming some militias are defeated and others just melt away, how do we plan to keep them from coming back? Is the surge permanent? Even if it were so, far fewer troops are required to root out terrorists than to hold gains. Will we need tens of thousands of additional soldiers to hold any gains?

The obvious premise offered by the President is that the Iraqis themselves can hold the gains. Based upon everything we have seen to date, other than in isolated cases, there is no evidence that the Iraqis will fight and die to defend their central government. I have repeatedly heard from returning soldiers that when the gunfire starts the Iraqis by and large disappear. They only seem dedicated when Shia get to kill Sunnis and vice versa.

By being bogged down as the main security force in Iraq and increasingly hostile cities, we are undermining our long-term potential to fight the war on terror.

For years, we have now been utilizing our National Guard and our Reserves as if they were regular military. Many are about to enter their second 12-month-plus tour of duty in combat, something historically many regular military veterans did not do. Because of the heavy usage, we are starting to short training funds and repair funds for those units. We are finding that employers are getting increasingly nervous about disruptions to their firms. Family objections are becoming more intense. Recruiters are running into increasing resistance.

As for our overused regular military, they are facing near exhaustion. What will be the long-term impact on these forces? What impact will this continued burning up of huge sums of military dollars do to our long-term ability to fight?

It has been said many times by defenders of this surge that Iraq is the place the enemy has chosen to fight, and this is the place that we must fight. That is partly true. Hezbollah has chosen to fight us on many fronts. Iran is a threat itself, not just in funding Iraq. Terrorists attacked in Madrid, London, Afghanistan, Pakistan and many other places throughout the world, and they continue to try to attack us in the United States. Iraq is not the only place terrorists have chosen to fight.

Furthermore, we face threats from North Korea, as the new Castro, Hugo Chavez, presents other challenges. We are sobered by the recent destruction of a satellite by China, potentially the most significant threat we face.

If we burn up the support of the American people, our military's ability to recruit, the usage of our Guard and Reserves in Iraq, how do we defend ourselves elsewhere?

It is not that this effort in Iraq is a failure, as some liberals claim. We have seen the governments in Libya and Pakistan significantly alter their ways when it comes to supporting terrorists. Hostile governments that harbor terrorists have to ask themselves whether it is worth the risk of military action by the United States, something Iran appears to be debating. And, most importantly, this fact is indisputable: Since 9/11, terrorists have not succeeded in any attacks on American soil.

Because of the bravery and valor of our soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have disrupted the terrorists' ability to gather and plan new methods of attacking us. If they surface, we get them.

During this period, we have had time to make significant progress in homeland security. While you may have heard that our Southwest border is not exactly airtight, progress certainly has been made. Every month we make additional progress. Our airports are more secure. Our ports are more secure. The PATRIOT Act has given us the ability to track and hunt down terrorists. We have improved both inside the U.S. and around the world our ability to track finances, communications and movement of terrorists.

The sacrifice of our brave men and women in the military and their families bought the United States Government valuable time to further prepare our domestic and worldwide ability to cope with terrorism. We will never achieve 100 percent success. But the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq took the battle to them, rather than requiring us to fight at home.

But we cannot sustain this intense effort indefinitely. Complete victory over terrorism is unlikely ever to occur. Sometimes you have to reposition and prepare for the broader battle, not exhaust yourself on just one front and then risk defeat in the overall conflict.

I beseech our President, Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice and others, never to give up the war on terrorism, but to understand that without significant tactical drawdowns in Iraq our entire counterterrorism and military efforts are threatened. Our Nation can ill afford another decade of defeatism and retreat that seized the United States after Vietnam.

All this said, I am going to vote ''no'' on the resolution. The resolution is no surge protection. The battle has already begun. Most of us have individually clearly stated our views and continue to do so.

For the United States Congress as a corporate body to deliver a public rebuke to the Commander in Chief during a battle that is already commenced would potentially put our soldiers at additional risk and confuse the world.

It is one thing for us to argue about strategy and tactics. It is another to have Congress openly defy the President. The world already knows we have deep divisions in America. The terrorists already know we disagree. But they also need to know that when the

fight starts, as Americans we stand united.

The fact is while I do not believe that the surge will succeed, none of us actually knows that it will not work. At this point it seems to me that our position as a Congress should be to encourage success in this mission. We need to support the Iraqis as they take increasing responsibility. What the world should see from us at least is shared hope for victory, not defeatism.

But the President does need to understand that opposition to the surge is not just among Democrats. It is even among his strongest supporters. Some of us who deeply share his passion to fight terrorism fear that he is potentially endangering his past successes, as well as our Nation's ability to continue the war on terror beyond this administration.

I hope and pray that the surge succeeds. But if it does not, we need to try a dramatically different approach that does not totally abandon Iraq, the region or the war on terror.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to yield 5½ minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS), a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, September 11, 2001, was a day I will never forget. From my office window I saw the smoke rise from the Pentagon shortly before my staff, several constituents and I were evacuated. A few hours later, I would learn that a young naval petty officer from my district named Nahamon Lyons was among the casualties in that attack on the Pentagon. Picking up the phone and calling his mom, Mrs. Jewel Lyons, back in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, was one of the most difficult calls I have ever had to make.

□ 2140

There was no one who wants to put an end to terrorism more than I do. That is why I supported our President when he chose to send U.S. military forces to Afghanistan to go after those who attacked our Nation on 9/11.

I met with the President at his invitation in the White House on September 26, 2002, to hear his case for a preemptive strike in Iraq. I kept my notes from that important meeting, and this is what the President told us. He said that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction; he said that Saddam Hussein trains terrorists on weapons of mass destruction; and he said that if military force is used it will be fierce, swift and tough. We now know that none of that information was accurate.

I do not know whether the President intentionally misled our Nation or received bad intelligence. Perhaps we will never know, but regardless, both possibilities trouble me.

Had I known that the information the President shared with me on September 26, 2002, was not accurate, I would have never given him the authority to use force in Iraq. At worst, the President misled us, and at best, our intelligence failed us.

There is not a more difficult decision Members of Congress must make than whether to send our brave men and women in uniform into harm's way. And when we are asked to make those decisions, we must know that our intelligence is correct.

We have all been personally touched by this war. I have a brother-in-law in the United States Air Force who is currently serving in the Middle East. My first cousin was in Iraq when his wife gave birth to their first child.

I have also traveled to Walter Reed Medical Center and met with countless soldiers who have suffered life-altering injuries in combat, many from my home State of Arkansas. The most recent was a U.S. Marine, Staff Sergeant Marcus Wilson of Dermott, Arkansas, who recently lost his leg in Iraq.

And I have visited with too many families of soldiers who are not coming home.

On August 11, 2004, I visited Iraq when the 39th Infantry Brigade of Arkansas had over 3,000 soldiers stationed there, and if the President gets his way with this escalation of the war, they will be back in Iraq by early next year.

Let me be clear on one very important point. I strongly believe that as long as we have troops in harm's way we must support them. I also want to see to it that our government keeps its promises to our military veterans.

When we invaded Iraq, the President said we were doing so with the intent of removing the evil regime of Saddam Hussein from power and to find and eliminate his weapons of mass destruction. We have since learned that there were no weapons of mass destruction, and not only has Saddam's evil regime come to an end, but he has now been put to death.

So I ask, why are we still there? We now find ourselves spending nearly $9 billion a month to try and force our way of life on a people who live a long way from Arkansas.

Had I known then what I know now, I would never have voted to give the President authority to use force in Iraq and, instead, would have directed the full strength of our military to Afghanistan to go after Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, those who actually attacked our Nation on 9/11.

It is my duty as a U.S. Congressman to demand accountability from this administration, accountability for the decisions that are being made in Iraq, accountability for how these decisions are carried out, and accountability for how our hardworking taxpayers money is being spent.

Sending 21,000 new troops into Iraq is not a new direction. It is simply an escalation of the war.

I am not advocating that we leave Iraq tonight, but we must begin to accelerate the training of the Iraqi Army and police force and replace American soldiers on the front lines of this war with Iraqis.

I rise this evening in support of this resolution to stop the escalation of this war. We can no longer tolerate more of the same, and we must demand from this President, our Commander in Chief, a new strategy and a new direction in Iraq.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair must again remind all Members that it is not in order to engage in personalities towards the President.

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

Mr. Speaker, during the debate on Iraq yesterday, we heard many times from some of our Democratic colleagues that they had no intention of defunding our troops in Iraq. Some even expressed outrage and indignation when some of our Republican Members made mention of their plans for defunding the troops. However, defunding plans clearly demonstrate their policy is to withdraw from the global war against Islamic militant extremists by surrendering to the enemy in Iraq.

We are faced with two options in Iraq, Mr. Speaker, to move forward or to retreat. Some of my Democrat colleagues appear to be united in opposing any effort to adopt a more vigorous strategy in Iraq and, instead, are ready to retreat. This resolution is but the first step in that direction.

Despite denials, the evidence is that the effort to cut the funding of our troops in Iraq and, in turn, for all of our efforts there are well underway.

Several bills have already been introduced by Democrat Members to compel a withdrawal. Let me read the titles and the provisions.

H.R. 508, to require the United States military disengagement from Iraq, which mandates a withdrawal of U.S. forces within 6 months of the enactment of this act and which cuts off funding for any deployment or continued deployment of forces in Iraq. Let me emphasize that again. It cuts off funding for any deployment, not just an increase, not just sending reinforcements, but for any deployment of U.S. forces in Iraq, including those already there, and it even limits the number of embassy personnel.

Also, H.R. 438, to prohibit an escalation in the number of members of the United States Armed Forces in Iraq, which states that funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Defense under any provision of law may not be obligated or expended to increase the number of members of the United States Armed Forces serving in Iraq.

H.R. 746, to provide for the safe and orderly withdrawal of United States military forces and Department of Defense contractors from Iraq, which mandates the beginning of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq within 30 days of the enactment of this act and complete the withdrawal no later than 180 days later. It also prohibits

funds to increase the number of Armed Forces serving in Iraq or to extend the deployment of those already there.

Or H.J. Res. 18, to redeploy U.S. forces from Iraq, which states that the deployment of United States forces in Iraq by the direction of Congress is hereby terminated, and the forces involved are to be redeployed at the earliest practical date.

When we offered a proposal to prohibit the cutting off of funds for our troops, that is what we wanted to do on our side of the aisle, a proposal to prohibit cutting off of funding of our troops in harm's way, the Democratic leadership blocked it from coming to the floor. Why? Well, based on the bills that I just mentioned, the only explanation I would think is that they fear that their caucus would indeed vote to cut off funding for our troops and leave them to face the enemy without the necessary resources.

So, within this context, they offer this nonbinding resolution which the Democrat leadership claims to support the troops. But how can such a claim be credible? Because in the second paragraph of the resolution, it opposes sending the reinforcements that our troops in Iraq need to confront the enemy.

□ 2150

Our commanders in the field say they need the reinforcements in order to address the security situation in Iraq. My stepson Douglas Lehtinen and my daughter-in-law, Lindsay, served in Iraq as Marine officers. Lindsay will soon serve in just a few weeks in Afghanistan. They understand the difference between saying we support our troops but we don't support your mission. It is the mission that matters.

Some of our colleagues seek to deny our troops that level of support, that level of backup which could be the difference for Dougie, for Lindsay, for so many others between death and survival.

This resolution seeks to substitute the assessment of the military commanders with the views of lawmakers. We claim to know more than the commanders.

Rather than focusing on the strategic policy issue, the Democratic leadership has drafted a resolution that undermines tactical military matters and seeks to override the decisions of our military commanders and the position articulated by General Petraeus. They do not want to discuss the grave consequences of withdrawal and surrender. They do not want to discuss the nature of the enemy, the Islamist militant extremists who seek to destroy us, who like vultures descend on us to prey on our weakness.

Some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle seek to focus on the abstract rather than on the reality. They believe that security will come from withdrawal and surrender. On the contrary, retreat guarantees that the Islamic militants will intensify their efforts against us. All we need to do is focus on bin Laden's own words.

In his 1996 Declaration of Jihad and other statements that he made, he repeatedly pointed to America's weakness being its low threshold for pain. As evidence, bin Laden pointed to the U.S. withdrawal from Somalia in 1993 because of casualties from the attacks of al Qaeda and its allies. Bin Laden said of our retreat from Mogadishu, ''The extent of your impotence and weakness became very clear.''

Bin Laden and the global Islamic militant network continued to test our resolve throughout the 1990s and today. They launched multiple attacks against U.S. targets with little response on our part. Then came the deplorable attacks on 9/11.

But they won't stop there, Mr. Speaker. They won't stop in Iraq, they won't stop in Afghanistan. They have made it abundantly clear that they will not stop until they dominate the world. Just listen to the words of bin Laden.

He said, ''The jihad in Palestine,'' referring to the attacks against Israel, ''and in Iraq is a personal duty incumbent upon the residents of the two countries alone. But if they are unable to carry it out, this duty is incumbent upon the residents of the adjacent countries, and so on and so forth, until the circle includes all the Muslim countries.''

And to focus on what al Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri said in December of last year just a few months ago, ''Iraq, Allah permitting, is the gateway to the liberation of Palestine and the restoration of the Islamic caliphate.''

Or those of Iran's Ahmadinejad when he said in January of this year, ''We must prepare ourselves to rule the world.''

This follows statements made in October of 2005 when Ahmadinejad said, ''Undoubtedly, I say that we will soon experience a world without the United States and will breathe in the brilliant time of Islamic sovereignty over today's world.''

It is echoed by other Iranian leaders who have threatened the U.S. and moderate Arab governments who say that, ''Anyone who recognizes Israel will burn in the fire of the Islamic nations. They will burn in their fury,'' and who have expressed their commitment to bringing America to its knees.

The Islamist militant extremist network have proven time and time again that this is not mere rhetoric. U.S. allies in the Middle East understand this reality. They understand the critical role that Iraq plays in the global war against Islamic militant extremists.

For example, Jordan's King Abdullah, a courageous leader who continues to demonstrate his country's and his people's commitment to peace, to security, and to democratic reform, summarized the situation we are facing in the following way. He said, ''My concern is political, revolving around Iran, around Iran's political involvement inside Iraq, its relation with Syria and Hezbollah, and the strengthening of this political strategic alliance. This would create a scenario where you have these four: Iran, Iraq, influenced by Iraq, Syria, and Hezbollah, who have a strategic objective that would create a major conflict. Our argument to the United States,'' he continues, ''is that a capable, independent, secure Iraq is the best way of containing Iran. The Iranians realize that the way to have success against the West is by them succeeding in Iraq. So Iraq is the battleground of the West against Iran.''

These are the words of our ally King Abdullah of Jordan. Yet some of our colleagues choose to believe that one can reason with our enemies.

Since this resolution provides no concrete alternative, some have expressed support for new diplomatic initiatives. However, I must ask my colleagues: With whom? Do they propose engaging with rogue regimes such as Iran and Syria? These rogue regimes are part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Some of our colleagues may say that diplomatic engagement is the key to our success. But I ask them, how are we to engage our allies in the region to help foster security and reconciliation in Iraq if by our withdrawal and surrender we leave them to fend for themselves against enemies in the region who have been strengthened by our retreat? How is diplomacy to be effective in such an abstract context?

We cannot expect to achieve success if we are operating from a position of weakness.

The so-called diplomatic alternative offered by some is no alternative at all. The resolution before us and the bills that have been introduced is a compelling argument, they believe, for a withdrawal from Iraq, but it adds to a policy of surrender.

Some may try to hide that fact by constantly repeating the empty words that they support the troops. But supporting our troops cannot be reconciled by refusing them the reinforcements that they need or with the retreat in the face of the enemy.

The hopelessness with which these measures spring is alien to our American spirit. That spirit has sustained us through many dark times, Mr. Speaker, throughout our history. This hopeful spirit springs directly from the hearts of the American people who have never given up faith in their belief, in their country, in their sons and daughters in uniform facing our enemies overseas.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of our revolution over two centuries ago when our country faced almost impossible odds and many counseled for retreat, Thomas Payne summoned forth the words that apply directly to the debate in this Chamber when he said, ''These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis shrink from the service of their country, but he that stands by it now deserves the love and

the thanks of every man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us: That the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.''

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues therefore to reject this resolution.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I recognize the gentleman, a member of the Rules and Agriculture Committees, from California, Representative DENNIS CARDOZA, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in a robust military and a strong national defense; however, I oppose this escalation, because I do not believe that it will make America safer or improve security in Iraq.

At this hour, sending more American forces cannot reasonably be expected to resolve a civil war rooted in over 14 centuries of deep-seated historical division. I oppose the escalation because I believe that we must recognize Iraq for what it is, not what we want it to be.

Our best hope lies not with increasing Iraqi dependence on us, but rather in handing over responsibility to them. This ultimate success or failure is the endeavor that now lies in the hands of them, not us.

□ 2200

Our goal in Iraq must reflect reality. Our objective should be to protect the ethnic minorities and religious minorities from further oppression and genocide, and to maintain a strong deterrent against the spread of a broader war in the Middle East. None of these ends is served, however, by simply escalating the failed strategy that has gotten us to this point today.

Like most Americans, I am deeply dismayed by this administration's inept prosecution of this war. At almost every turn, the President and his team have been intolerant and dismissive to outside advice, the consequences of which have been dire. The President sent our men and women into battle absent a real plan and lacking the tools they need to protect themselves. By pushing our allies aside, the President has isolated America from the world. We are now bearing the burden of this war virtually alone. It did not have to come to this.

From the beginning, responsible critics who genuinely desire success in Iraq have offered the President and his team sensible strategies for changing course. Almost 3 years ago, I proposed a plan to the President that offered a responsible path forward. I am still waiting to this day for a response.

President Roosevelt during World War II, President Truman during Korea and the dawn of the Cold War, President Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis, and President Reagan at the twilight of the Cold War all successfully guided the ship of state through the roughest of seas. That caliber of leadership has been sorely lacking during this challenging time for our Nation. This President's inability to admit and correct mistakes has not served our Nation or our troops well. Now Iraq has descended into a bloody civil war that cannot be resolved by the American military. The Sunni-Shia divide goes back 1,400 years. Twenty thousand more American troops cannot reverse 14 centuries of division and hate in that country.

According to a recent poll, 71 percent of Iraqis want us to leave. Sixty-one percent of Iraqis support attacking U.S. troops. To argue that increasing our presence in Iraq will lessen the violence defies common sense. The American people and our military did not sign up for refereeing a civil war halfway across our planet. History has taught us that outside powers are ill-equipped to influence or resolve civil wars in foreign lands.

I am also deeply troubled that the war in Iraq has undermined our efforts to address urgent threats in the war on terrorism, note notably in Afghanistan. After failing to kill Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora, the administration turned its attention to Iraq, allowing the Taliban to regain lost ground.

I believe we must refocus our efforts on the following objectives:

Stopping the spread of a wider war in the Middle East.

Preventing a humanitarian crisis in Iraq.

Protecting the ethnic and religious groups, such as Assyrian Christians, who are vulnerable to persecution.

And we must redouble our efforts to snuff out the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Let me close, Mr. Speaker, by paying homage to our men and women in uniform. Some have alleged that this debate is inconsistent with support for our troops. Those who insist that Congress should remain silent on this issue are very familiar with that word ''silence.'' Many have remained silent when it comes time to supporting care for our veterans and their families as well. Many have stood idly by for years as our troops went into battle lacking the equipment and body armor they needed. Most of all, far too many have been invisible when it comes to genuinely supporting our servicemen and women by insisting on an effective plan to conclude and win this conflict. Simply repeating the word ''victory'' does not equal a plan, or support for our men and women in uniform.

I want to conclude by thanking those serving in harm's way. These brave men and women are America's finest. They have done everything that has been asked of them and more. Let us honor them by thanking them for a job well done and pursuing a policy that is worthy of their sacrifice.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE), a member of our Foreign Affairs Committee, for 10 minutes.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I appreciate your leadership and the time you have given me to talk about this really important resolution, the resolution of retreat from combat.

You know, we in this House, in this warm House tonight at 5 minutes after the hour of 10 o'clock, we view this resolution from our own personal opinions. But maybe we should view something, and this resolution in particular, from a historical standpoint, for history has no opinion but is a teacher of hard facts of retrospect.

You know, this debate is not new to Congress. Years ago, after 5 long years of war, this Nation found itself at war with the greatest empire on Earth, Great Britain. The war of independence was not going well in 1781 and 1782. It looked bleak. The Commander in Chief, George Washington, had lost most of the battles he was engaged in. Public opinion was at an all-time low during the war. There were even mutinies in the Army from the Pennsylvania volunteers and the New Jersey volunteers. There was talk in the press of even reuniting with Great Britain, of all things, forming a truce and going back to be with the British. There were preachers of gloom, doom, despair and defeatism. There were generals on the battlefield that didn't like the way George Washington was handling himself as Commander in Chief and preaching to the public and their troops, We can't beat the British.

The debate was not new to this House, Mr. Speaker. Congress wanted to cut funding. The Continental Congress wanted to cut funding for the American Army and they not only wanted to do so, they did slash funds. Congress even in this time of bleak war reduced the size of the Continental Army. For the first and only time during the long war, George Washington left the field of battle and came to Congress and made the case for winning the war and not giving up, not surrendering, not reuniting with Great Britain.

And he made the comments. He said, ''We should never despair. Our situation before has been very unpromising. But it has changed for the better. So it will be again.''

It's a good thing the Commander in Chief did not listen to the gloom, doom and despair of the Continental Congress in 1781. Then, as now, victory was the only option. Victory is simple. You defeat the enemy wherever they are.

So George Washington and a handful of barefoot soldiers at Yorktown defeated who the skeptics and cynics said could never be defeated—the British. The consequences of loss in 1782 would have been somewhat staggering.

Mr. Speaker, the flag that flies behind you now would have been the Union Jack instead of the Stars and Stripes, and this country, this people, this free people, would have been much different had we not won the war and stayed the course.

The consequences of abandoning our troops in the field by not giving them more troops would be joy to the terrorists that hate us and want to kill us. I

am sure the terrorists throughout the world would vote ''yes'' for this resolution of retreat and surrender, and those of us who want to defeat the terrorists should vote ''no.'' Our troops on the battlefield need to know help is coming. Like most Members of Congress in this House, they know people and they know people in their congressional districts that have died for this country in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I carry with me the names of the fallen in my congressional district. The first one that fell was Sergeant Russell Slay, 1 day after I was elected in 2004. There are 17 names on these sheets of paper, all of them volunteers from southeast Texas, who went to Iraq and Afghanistan to fight terrorists, as they say in southeast Texas. Their names, Mr. Speaker, are more than names. They are real people.

Sergeant Slay died November 9, 2004, from Humble, Texas.

Lance Corporal Wesley Canning, November 10, 2004. He was from Friendswood, Texas.

Lance Corporal Fred Maciel, January 26, 2005, from Spring, Texas.

Private First Class Wesley Riggs, May of 2005 from Beach City, Texas.

Lance Corporal Robert Martinez, Splendora, Texas. He died December 1, 2005, at the age of 21.

Staff Sergeant Michael Durbin, January 25, 2006, from Spring, Texas.

Walter Moss, Jr. He was a tech sergeant from Houston, Texas. March 30, 2006.

Private First Class Kristian Menchaca, June 16, 2006, at the age of 23, from Houston, Texas.

Staff Sergeant Benjamin Williams, June 20, 2006, from Orange, Texas. He was 30.

Staff Sergeant Alberto Sanchez, Jr., at the age of 33, he was killed in Iraq on June 24, 2006, and from Houston.

Lance Corporal Ryan Miller, September 14, 2006, from Pearland, Texas. He was 20.

Staff Sergeant Edward Reynolds at the age of 28 was killed September 26, 2006, from Houston, Texas.

Captain David Fraser, killed in Iraq on November 26, 2006, at the age of 25, and he was from Houston.

Lance Corporal Luke Yepsen, December 14, 2006, at the age of 20, from Kingwood, Texas.

Specialist Dustin Donica, December 28, 2006, from Spring, Texas, at the age of 22.

Specialist Ryan Berg, January 9, 2007, at the age of 18 from Sabine Pass, Texas. Ryan Berg enlisted on his 18th birthday to join the United States Marine Corps.

And Staff Sergeant Terrence Dunn just a few days ago, February 7, 2007, from Houston, Texas.

Seventeen names from one congressional district, Mr. Speaker. There are names of over 3,000. And it seems to me that we owe it to these individuals, these American patriots, to send them the help that they need so that their lives meant more than just dying while the rest of the country decided to run away. We should finish what we have started. We should win this battle. We should fight the terrorists. We should look them in the eye and tell them, We're not going away until our job is done.

This resolution does not promote American unity to finish the job. This resolution does not hold in honor the names on this list, these real people, killed for this country and all volunteers. And they, like the ones that died in the Continental Army 200 years ago, died for a reason. The families that I have talked to believe in what their sons and daughters died for, and that was for fighting these evil people. We call them terrorists, these extremists, that hate us and will kill us if they have the chance.

So, I think history has taught us a lesson, that this Congress 200 years ago was faced with a choice and decided to take the funds away from George Washington. Fortunately, he was able to reunite the country and win that independence. And I hope that we reunite this country and finish the job and win this battle that we are fighting in a land far, far away for the same reason, and that are fighting people that are terrorists and hate us and people that are extreme in their beliefs in their hatred for America.

Because like I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the flag that flies behind you is important. It is important that it is not the Union Jack or some other flag, and we owe it all to the military, the volunteers, the young men and women that have served recently and have served in our past for this country.

□ 2215

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 7 minutes to the distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

Mr. PAYNE. I appreciated having the opportunity to control the time in the past several hours, and perhaps might request from the chairman perhaps an additional 2 minutes as I respond and wrap up.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that I listened with great interest to the George Washington story, and there is no question that there were tough times. But George Washington had some pretty intelligent advisers. You know, the people who signed the Declaration of Independence, he had people like Adams and Washington. You had people like Crispus Attucks, the first person to die in the Revolutionary War and in the Boston Massacre on May 4, 1770.

You had people who participated in the Boston Tea Party because they said taxation without representation is tyranny. It was Christmas Eve in Pennsylvania when George Washington came across the Delaware and attacked the Hessian soldiers on Christmas Eve because they were unaware that this attack was coming. George Washington came from New Jersey, Morristown, Newark, and went on through and did have a victory.

But let me say the difference, when George Washington was fighting, there was a clear and present issue. We were fighting for independence. We knew exactly what it was. We were being held bondage by the British, that Union Jack.

But what do we have here? We have, following 9/11, support from practically every country in the world. But then we went on and Osama bin Laden said he did the bombing, he took credit for it, the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the final plane that was brought down on the way to the Capitol and the White House.

Then we said that we were going into Iraq. First of all, it was because there were weapons of mass destruction. Then it was the fact that we had to have a regime change. At one point we talked about we had to remove Saddam Hussein.

We kept looking for reasons, and that is a big difference. We had the preemptive strike, and then we tried to come up with the reason that we were doing it, and it continued to change, one reason after another.

There is a great sense of sadness among those of us who foresaw over 4 years ago the tragedy that is now unfolding in Iraq. On October 8 and 9, 2002, I stood right here in this very well at the House of Representatives, and I managed the time those 2 days in opposition to the preemptive first strike for Iraq. It was in the 107th Congress, and now we are in the 110th Congress, and the war that we assumed would be swift and certain now continues to rage.

I am looking over the remarks I made at that time. It saddens me that the argument of those of us who oppose the war fell on deaf ears. At that time, I stated that a unilateral first strike would undermine the moral authority of the United States of America. I stated that results of substantial losses of life will occur, that there will be a destabilization of the Middle East region and undermine the ability of our Nation to address unmet domestic priorities.

It saddens me beyond words that 3,122 Americans had to sacrifice their lives and over 23,000 have been wounded for a war that did not have to be fought. Included in this number are 50 fatalities from my home State of New Jersey and 366 wounded. Estimates are up towards 100,000 Iraqi men, women and children have been killed.

After the administration has been proven wrong on every prediction from the length of the war to weapons of mass destruction to the strength of the insurgency, we are now being asked to trust their judgment on a new strategy, which would put 20,000 more American lives on the line. This plan will not provide lasting security for Iraqis. It is not what the American people have asked for in November.

Haven't we learned anything from our mistakes yet?

Recent so-called short-term troop surges in Iraq have not stopped the violence from getting worse. There is nothing to suggest that this time will be any different.

For example, we had Operation Together Forward from June to October 2006. In June, the Bush administration announced a new plan for securing Baghdad by increasing the presence of Iraqi security forces. That plan failed, so in July, the White House announced that additional American troops would be sent into Baghdad.

By October, a U.S. military spokesman, General William Caldwell, acknowledged that the operation and troop Increases was a failure and had not met our overall expectations of sustaining a reduction in the level of violence. Regardless of how the administration intends to increase the troops in Iraq, the result will be the same.

There is additional strain on our military personnel and their families, and personal lives will be upset by unexpectedly early deployments of family members or unexpected delays in their homecoming. This is an additional burden to our military families that they should not have to bear.

By extending operations, we undertake a strategic risk. Our ability to meet potential future challenges is strained under the current operational demands. Increasing these demands only increase the risk to our future capacity.

I had the privilege of serving in the past as a congressional delegate to the United Nations. I strongly believe in the power of democracy. If we had allowed the United Nations inspectors to complete their work before the war instead of suddenly ordering them out of Iraq, I believe things would have turned out much differently. Instead, the administration proceeded full speed ahead towards war, as they disseminated faulty intelligence and relied on scare tactics to garner support.

I believe the time has come to begin an orderly withdrawal of American forces from Iraq. This approach would send a message to the Iraqis that they must take more responsibility for their own security and would reduce the strain on the American military.

The administration should listen to the Baker-Hamilton commission, which has offered a stinging assessment of virtually every aspect of the U.S. venture in Iraq and called for a reshaping of the American presence and a new Middle East diplomacy initiative to prevent the country from sliding into anarchy.

I conclude by saying I have heard my colleagues on the other side warn about Iraq falling into chaos and dangers of the United States losing our standing in the world. Sadly, Iraq already is in total chaos, and, unfortunately, the United States, a country we all love, has suffered much loss and prestige around the world.

In the debate before the war those of us who predicted the outcome did not prevail. I pledge with my colleagues to listen this time to vote against escalation of the war and support this resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I am pleased to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS), a graduate of West Point.

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, leaving the Capitol last night, I came across a sign on the Seventh Street Bridge overpass that said, ''Democrats, get a peace plan.''

Clearly, someone felt that this nonbinding resolution does not get us any closer to peace, and some, myself included, would argue that this resolution takes us further away from our goal of securing the peace. Retreat, surrender, leaving, disengagement, that is the view of some politicians in Washington, DC, making decisions on combat operations overseas. If there is any clear comparison to Vietnam, this legislation is it.

Here is the Republican plan for peace, victory. In the 1980s, it was a peace through strength that was a military I was proud to serve in. Our last best chance for victory is by supporting the decisions of the commanders in the field. Their current request is to reinforce the Iraqi military and police who will take the lead in military action against all insurgents and al Qaeda in Iraq.

We are to ensure reconstruction continues to empower Iraq's security forces and newly elected leadership to be prepared to fully assume their destiny, and to leave, when asked, by a sovereign country of Iraq.

It is our national security interest to support moderate Arab states. Moderate Arab states that are democratic observe the rule of law, support women's rights, and are allies with us in the war on international jihadist terrorists. We have an opportunity for Iraq to be a moderate Arab state and an ally.

However, we can be assured if we leave early that the radicals will take over after an ensuing and huge bloodbath and will forever be an enemy to the United States. During the buildup to the Iraqi constitutional elections, I wore a flag pin representing both Iraq and the United States of America.

As I have traveled about my district in the past weeks, I have put the pin back as a sign of solidarity with a sovereign and free Iraq. What this resolution does is sever this alliance. This commitment emboldens our adversaries. It tells the world we are unable to go the distance and keep our commitment to do the right thing.

Well, I will not accept defeat, and especially from political armchair quarterbacks. The military commanders in the field have asked for reenforcements. This appeal may be our last best hope for a free democratic Iraq willing to be able to protect their citizens and support us in the war on terrorism.

Are we politicians sitting safe and secure in Washington, DC, going to say no to this request? Surely not.

Throughout our history, a debate such as this has occurred on the floor of the House and across the Nation. Monday was the 198th anniversary of the birth of our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln. At his tomb I read this quote from the Gettysburg Address, which I believe is applicable today. ''It is for the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who have fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain . . . ''

Instead of fighting, we are arguing amongst ourselves. We ought to commit our country to finish the task at hand. We should be united in the cause and to pray to God, the Creator of all, to bless our efforts here, the efforts of our military, the government of Iraq, her people, and, yes, even our enemies.

I want to end with another quote from Abraham Lincoln. In his farewell address to Springfield as President-Elect, he said: ''Today I leave you; I go to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved upon General Washington. Unless the great God who assisted him shall be with me and aid me, I must fail. But if the same omniscient mind, and Almighty arm that directed and protected him, shall guide and support me, I shall not fail, I shall succeed. Let us all pray that the God of our Father may not forsake us now. To him I commend you all. Permit me to ask that with equal security and faith, you all will invoke His wisdom and guidance for me.''

May God bless our President and military leaders. May God bless our men and women in uniform who volunteered to protect our Nation from harm, and may God bless the United States of America.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia, a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Mr. BARROW.

Mr. BARROW. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, since taking a seat in this body over 2 years ago, I have supported our President's efforts in the war on terror at every turn. I have been to Iraq. I have visited those wounded there, and I have spoken with family members who have sacrificed more for their country than most people could stand.

I have carefully considered the President's plan. I have listened to his reasons, and I have tried to understand them. But the inescapable conclusion

is this. While there are differences between the President's new strategy and his prior conduct of the war, the similarities still outweigh the differences. The President's new plan is not a new strategy. Instead, it represents more of the same strategy that has gotten us to where we are today. If we are going to defeat terrorism in Iraq, we simply cannot afford to keep doing more of the same.

Congress cannot manage a war, and it should not try. Instead, Congress' job is to demand accountability from those charged with the conduct of the war effort, and so far Congress has failed to do that job.

This resolution, however imperfect, is intended to bring about some accountability on the part of those charged with the conduct of the war effort, and it says of the President's plan, thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.

The President's plan is found wanting because he doesn't explain how this escalation in the number of American troops can make any difference in a war plan that depends on redeploying so many more Iraqi troops. We have been given no credible explanation as to why 21,000 more American troops can accomplish what the 130,000 already on the ground cannot accomplish.

The President's plan is found wanting because it calls for completely new rules of engagement.

□ 2230

The President's plan is found wanting because it calls for new rules of engagement, with no explanation as to why such rules of engagement were not allowed in the past when they would have done the most good.

The question before us is not whether the President's new plan represents a better chance of success in Iraq. The real question is whether the chances for success it represents is a good enough chance to be worth the sacrifices that our soldiers will have to make to implement it.

A 1 percent increase in the chances of success may be better than no increase, but our troops deserve a better plan that that. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that this plan represents the change in strategy that we need in Iraq, nor does it offer a good enough chance for success to be worth the sacrifices that it will cost. And that is why I will support the resolution.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5½ minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS).

(Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of our military men and women. I will strongly support our soldiers serving in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan. I support all off our veterans, men and women who have served our country with great honor and distinction, and because of my support for our military men and women, I also rise in support of this resolution.

I support this resolution because I see no evidence that an increase in troops will lead to anything other than more lost American lives. I do not think a troop surge will bring stability to Baghdad. I do not think the surge will enable the Iraqis to stand up and defend themselves, and I do not think the surge will end the religious and ethnic strife that has existed in the Middle East for centuries.

So here we are this week debating the President's proposal to send more troops into Baghdad. And as expected, the rhetoric from our friends on the right has at times been shameful. To suggest that Democrats and Republicans who support this embolden the enemy, that they are defeatist, and that we do not support the troops, and that we want to micromanage the war, and that we do not want to preserve freedom and liberty in our great country puzzles me.

It seems to me our friends on the right do not like discourse, they don't like questions, and they do not like meaningful discussions. They do not want us to question the President's strategy, instead they want us to follow him like sheep down a tragic street that dead-ends in failure.

Attempts to use fear and insults to quiet the administration's critics are distasteful and quite frankly hurt America. Why do those who oppose this resolution want to discourage the type of action that led to the founding of our Nation? The very actions that allowed the United States to continue evolving towards that never ending goal of a more perfect union.

Our country derives its strengths from the diversity of views and ideas that comes from its people. If we disagree with the President's proposal, it is our duty, particularly as Members of Congress, to say so. I maintain that is the highest of patriotism, and I am not the only one who thinks so.

The President Theodore Roosevelt said, referring to the Presidency, and I quote him, ''That there should be full liberty to tell the truth about his acts, and that this means that it is exactly necessary to blame him when he does wrong as to praise him when he does right. Any other attitude in any American citizen is both base and servile. To announce that there must be no criticism of the President or that to stand with the President right or wrong is not only unpatriotic and servile, but it is morally treasonable to the American public.''

I do not know about the majority of Republicans in Congress, but I agree with Teddy. Our actions this week do not dishearten the troops, nor reflect a lack of support for our troops. Defense Secretary Gates and General Pace both testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that a resolution disagreeing with the President's proposal would not dishearten the troops.

In my opinion, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may have a little better idea of troop morale than Members of Congress. I strongly disagree with the notion that our actions this week embolden the enemy. If our lack of support for the President's plan emboldens the enemy, then public opinion polls also embolden the enemy, since polls show the majority of Americans disagree with the administration's policy in Iraq. And if this is the case, why do not we see condemnation of the American people for their views? It is because politically those who oppose this resolution know they cannot criticize the American public, but can criticize those of us who serve here in Congress.

If the actions of the House and American people embolden the enemy, then we need to consider everyone's comments. Iraq's prime minister al-Maliki recently said that the Bush administration's description of the Iraqi government's being on borrowed time, listen, gives a morale boost to the terrorists. The prime minister of Iraq is accusing the administration of doing the same thing that many of us are being accused of doing in this House chamber. How shameful. Let's get real.

I contend that the American people, the Democrats, the Republicans, and that President Bush loves America. The discussion we are having in Congress this week is an extension of the cure for America, because we all want what we think is best for our country. And what do we want? Success. We want security.

In order for us to have success and security we must force the Iraqi people to fight for their own country. In my opinion, the way we do this is not by adding more troops to the kill zone in Baghdad, but rather take our troops out of the kill zone and force the Iraqis to step up their efforts.

We should put our troops in a position to support the Iraqis when they need us. This way the pressure is on the Iraqis, not on our fighting men and women. The idea that we are going to cut and run from the Middle East and allow terrorists to control Iraq is false and has no basis in reality or in history.

We did not leave Germany after World War II, we did not leave Korea after that war, and we will not leave the Middle East after our soldiers' responsibilities in Iraq have ended. We did not leave the Middle East after the Persian Gulf War and we will not leave the Middle East now.

Mr. Speaker, the French did not win the Revolutionary War for us and we cannot win this peace for the Iraqis; they have to win it for themselves.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, if I could ask how the allocation of time is being handled, because our next speaker I would like to recognize for 11 minutes. But we have been told that we need to wait to even out the distribution of time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLISON). The gentlewoman from Florida has 5¼ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts has 13¾ minutes remaining.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO).

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, the approaching vote on this resolution has caused me and I am sure many of my colleagues to give serious and considerable thought to the most difficult issue that faces America today.

Like many of my friends on both sides of the aisle, and like many Americans I am opposed to increasing our troop presence in Iraq. I am sure we have all asked ourselves individually what we would do if we were in the oval office at this time.

If I were in the oval office, if I were Commander in Chief, I would tell the Iraqis something similar to what Benjamin Franklin told a woman who asked him as he came out of the negotiations on the Continental Congress, Dr. Franklin, what have you given us? He answered, a Republic if you can keep it.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we have with our blood and treasure already won a great victory when we deposed a dictator and helped the Iraqis set up a fledgling democracy. Frankly, I believe it is up to them to keep it.

Mr. Speaker, the fall of Saddam has helped create a situation in the Middle East that we did not anticipate but one that can be exploited. I believe that the ethnic and sectarian earthquake inside and across the broader Middle East is underway. I believe the fault lines in this conflict can be seen moving today, not just in Iraq, but in Lebanon, Iran and elsewhere.

If I were Commander in Chief, I would do what I could to exploit the situation. I believe it can be exploited, but not if we are acting as a referee in what has become a civil war. I believe that prolonging or increasing the U.S. presence in Iraq will virtually guarantee this fault line will move in a way not advantageous to us.

Sure, if I was President, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you unequivocally I would not be sending an extra 20,000 soldiers. But I am not President of the United States, I am not Commander in Chief, I am a Member of Congress. And while I have every right as a Member of Congress to voice my concerns and objections to what I see as flaws in the strategies this President may choose to employ, neither I nor this Congress has the right to micromanage a war.

Mr. Speaker, our Constitution vests sole authority of the U.S. military in the President of the United States, not in 435 Congressmen or 100 Senators. Our Founding Fathers empowered the President, not the Congress, with the authority precisely to avoid the kind of group micromanagement of our military strategy that we are seeing on this floor today.

I differ with the President on many things, Mr. Speaker. Indeed one of them is the recently announced surge strategy. But while I am concerned about the wisdom of the strategic military decision, Congress does not have the authority nor the ability to manage this war or any other by committee.

I fear that this resolution is just the beginning of a long-term attempt by Congress to become the micromanager of the conflict in Iraq. As many Members have correctly noted, this resolution is nonbinding, but it has been described by its authors as just the bark from the Congressional dog. The bite will come as they say during the appropriations process.

As I said at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, for a time this resolution posed a dilemma for me. But after hours of listening to the debate, reading the Constitution, it helped me to decide how to vote, there is no longer a doubt in my mind. I accept the wisdom of the Founding Fathers and bend to the constraints of the document that we swear to uphold and defend.

I hope that Members of both sides will think carefully about the precedent that this debate will set for the future, for future Presidents, future wars, future soldiers. I would ask them to join me in opposing this ill-conceived resolution.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to welcome this much needed debate, on perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing our generation, our country, this war in Iraq. I intend to support this nonbinding resolution not because I believe it is perfect, rather in fact I feel it is probably imperfect.

But I am supporting it because I hope this will be the beginning of a rational, bipartisan dialogue for a new direction to be employed together with the House of Representatives, with the Congress working together with the President.

For after all, Mr. Speaker, we are the people's House. The choices that we have before us today are more than simply cut and run or stay the course. For after all, we know a long time ago that was nothing more than a sound bite, and the American public understood that it was nothing more than a political sound bite. We are a wonderful country. We have tremendous resources, ingenuity, and we have credibility notwithstanding our difficulties today throughout the world.

And therefore, as the world's greatest super power, we have resources and means in which we can offer alternative choices to bring together people, not only in the Middle East, but allies throughout the world that supported us in the past.

Everyone who has talked about this nonbinding resolution talks about the cost. We all talk about their support for our men and women in uniform, our support to continue to ensure that they are properly funded and to ensure that we always, always remember the current costs that have been expended, over 3,000 lives, over 23,000 that have been injured, and a fiscal accountability that has gotten lost in the checks and balances of the Congress, a war that initially was advertised to cost us $60 billion is now in excess of $379 billion, $8 billion a month, with a supplemental request for another $235 billion.

Mr. Speaker, we do not need nor should we micromanage the war. But we should, as an equal branch of Government, require and demand accountability. That is why I stood up on this floor 2 weeks ago supporting the Blue Dog Accountability Act to ensure that we have an opportunity to review on a regular basis the conduct of the war, the no-bid contracts, the single sourcing, putting our troops in harm's way without adequate armament.

Let us not forget, for almost 4 years our President and the course that he conducted and the case he has made has had a blank check, literally a blank check to conduct this effort as he saw fit.

□ 2245

And it has only been in the last 6 months when it became abundantly clear in the last year that it was determined that a new course or a new direction would be needed. But, unfortunately, so much of this new course that the President offered last month is more of the same and, unfortunately, too little too late.

I told the President that I was doubtful on this surge. Why? Because we have had previous surges, back in August of last year a surge in Baghdad with six brigades that was promised by the Iraqi Army. They delivered two. They weren't very good. We neutralized Sadr City. Maliki got political pressure placed on him. We were asked to leave.

Unless we have a robust political effort that accompanies this surge, I fear, unfortunately, more of the same will occur, which is why I asked the Secretary of State last week what is plan B?

We are, whether we like it or not, in the middle of a sectarian civil war. And unfortunately, the folks that we are trying to referee are more concerned about how power is distributed and how oil revenues are distributed as opposed to instituting a democracy in the Middle East. And therefore, we need a new direction.

Have we not learned the lessons that many of us remember from the Vietnam War? Secretary Powell knew those lessons well. Remember what Secretary Powell advised our President? He says, Iraq, Mr. President, is like a Pottery Barn. We break it, we own it. Unfortunately, how true those words have come.

But Secretary Powell knew from his experience as a general that the Powell doctrine invoked four principles, one, to have overwhelming support of the Nation; two, in fact, to ensure that we

had a broad international coalition; three, that we went in with overwhelming force; and, four, that we had an exit strategy. None of those are in evidence.

So let me close. I believe that a new direction is evident. I believe America is less safe today than it was before the 9/11 attacks. And as violence in Iraq climbs and the costs continue to soar, we need a new direction in Iraq in a bipartisan fashion.

I ask my colleagues to work on this bipartisan manner, evaluating the facts, not on rhetoric, to create a real plan for security in Iraq, stability in the Middle East, and let's not forget Afghanistan, the problems that exist in Lebanon today, and let's come together as a nation. Our troops deserve better.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I applaud the gentleman from California for his insightful and thoughtful remarks and particularly his observation that this is not about micromanaging the war. This is about accountability.

And I daresay that if over the course of the past two previous Congresses that there was oversight and that there was more monitoring, we would not find ourselves in this unhappy moment.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana, a new Member of the House, a valued member of the Committee on Veterans Affairs and Financial Services, Mr. DONNELLY.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. Speaker, we all want success in Iraq. We want a stable region. We want safety and security for our troops and peace in the Middle East.

Our service men and women are the finest in the world, the best trained, the most dedicated. They are incredibly fine soldiers and people. They deserve a clear mission in Iraq. They deserve to have all the protective equipment and armor needed to keep them safe. They deserve to have all the funding required, and they deserve to have the best leadership in the field and the finest military planning from Washington.

What our brave troops do not deserve is Washington's bungling. We had bad intelligence at the start, a flawed occupation plan that failed to send enough troops, despite the best advice of the Army's Chief of Staff at that time, and Washington failed to properly plan for critical logistics such as electricity and infrastructure. These mistakes have put our troops in much greater danger.

With these issues in mind, I sent a letter to the Administration over 1 month ago asking for specific answers as to how this surge would increase our chances for success in Iraq. I was very hopeful for positive solutions. I also asked at that time what specific benchmarks we could look at to indicate whether or not we were making progress. As of this date, I have yet to receive any answer from the Administration.

I have spoken to veterans in Winamac and in Osceola, Indiana, to constituents in restaurants and churches and to concerned Hoosiers throughout my district. I have also met with Iraq Study Group cochairman, Lee Hamilton, with military representatives, and with my valued colleagues. What I have heard consistently is that our brave troops should not be placed in the middle of what is increasingly becoming a very dangerous civil war.

Our fighting troops have been placed in an almost impossible situation. They are trying to bring stability to Iraqi cities and provinces where a fierce and bloody religious war rages between the Sunnis and the Shiites. Our service men and women from Michigan City and South Bend and Logansport cannot end this vicious cycle of death. Only the Iraqis can do that. The Iraqi Government and people have to want peace and stability for their country as much as we want it for them.

If the proposed surge increased our chances of succeeding in Iraq, I would support it wholeheartedly. However, I fear this surge will not lead to an Iraq that will be stable over the long term, but instead will simply put over 21,500 more American troops into harm's way. There will not be stability until the Shiites and Sunnis decide that the price of the death and destruction they inflict upon each other is no longer worth the cost. The Iraqis have to make this decision, and sending 21,500 more of our finest citizens will not cause the Iraqis to make that decision any quicker. In fact, it might only delay that day of decision for them.

Two recent surges by American troops did not bring additional security to Iraq, and I do not see how placing more troops in the most dangerous areas of the country at this point will calm things down. Our troops deserve America's full support, full funding, and all the equipment and materials they need to remain safe and battle ready. The time has come for the Iraq Government and its troops to step up and to seek peace with each other. Our obligation in Congress is to provide common-sense judgment that guarantees complete support for our troops and a plan that provides a path toward peace and stability.

I do not see, and I have not been shown, how this surge will further our chances for success. For the above stated reasons, I will be voting for House Concurrent Resolution 63. May God bless America and our troops serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and everywhere else throughout the world.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I would ask where we stand in terms of the time allocation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLISON). The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) has 3¼ minutes. The gentlelady from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) has 2 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am going to reserve the balance of our time to have it for the further allocation of the remainder of the evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. At the beginning of the debate, the Chair provisionally allocated 5 hours to the leaders or their designees in approximation of the amount of the controlled debate that might be conducted before midnight.

It appears at this point that all of that 10-hour allotment will be consumed before midnight. The Chair will try to achieve parity between the two sides by allocating 20 minutes for each side at this time, but wants each side to know that all pending balances of time will lapse at midnight.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. GOHMERT. The Speaker has indicated that he will allocate the remaining time 20 minutes a side, but the time will expire at midnight. I would ask if it would make sense, since 20 minutes gets us to 11:35, why not just take 65 minutes, or actually you have got 3¼ and you have got 2, so it would be an hour, and give each side 30 minutes a side, and then we don't have to keep playing this game and redo this and waste 10 minutes trying to reallocate the time. That is my inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would advise Members that the distribution of debate time takes into account the difference between the time remaining until midnight and the time consumed in debate.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, my next speaker will be allocated 11 minutes of time, so if this is the proper time to have him be recognized for 11 minutes without interruption, I would like to recognize Mr. FRANKS, a member of the Armed Services Committee for 11 minutes.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, if I can inquire of my friend and colleague on the other side, I have a speaker that has been waiting here. Understanding that I have 3½ minutes left before the reallocation, I would like to give her an opportunity to address the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 23½ minutes remaining.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. If the gentleman would yield. We have been waiting on our side as well for such a long time, and if my good friend from Massachusetts would allow Mr. FRANKS to give his statement, and then we can continue.

I would like to recognize Mr. FRANKS, a member of the Armed Services Committee for 11 minutes, and I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, today, as we embrace the grave responsibility of debating an issue that will have profound impact on future American generations, it seems very appropriate to remind ourselves of the ideal that gave birth to this Nation in the first place. We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator

with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Whether we realize it or not, most of the important discussions in this Chamber, including the one in this moment, center around whether we still believe those words.

In these hours, America finds herself at war with an expressively dangerous ideology that is the antithesis of those words and everything that is the American ideal. What concerns me most is that this war between an ideology committed to the absolute death to destroy freedom and subjugate the entire world, and the world's free people who still remain primarily asleep.

Mr. Speaker, this ideological war did not begin on 9/11. It began many years ago when certain Muslim extremists embraced a divergent Islamist dogma that dictates that all infidels must die. It was called then as it should be called now, jihad.

Thomas Jefferson was the first American President to send U.S. military force to war against Islamist jihad. The Marine hymn begins, ''From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli,'' the latter being a reference to Jefferson's war against the Islamist Barbary pirates based in Tripoli, in present day Libya.

This is the same jihadist ideology that murdered Israeli athletes in 1972, that took American hostages in Iran, that murdered Marines in their barracks in 1983, that bombed the World Trade Center in 1993, Riyadh in 1995, the Khobar Towers in 1996, the embassy in 1998, the USS *Cole* in 2000, and that brutally murdered scores of little schoolchildren on opening day in Beslan, Russia.

And then, Mr. Speaker, this same dark ideology massacred nearly 3,000 Americans on September 11.

The ideology and practice of Islamist jihad is decapitating humanitarians with hacksaws on television while the victims scream for mercy, cowardly hiding behind women and children while launching rockets deliberately targeting innocent civilians, continually breaking treaties of peace, and forcing children to blow themselves to pieces to affect the murder of other innocents, and this, as their own mothers leap for joy as they do.

□ 2300

As we anticipate future actions of jihadists, we should all consider very carefully. Al Qaeda's al-Zawahiri said: ''The jihad movement is growing and rising. It reached its peak with the two blessed raids on New York and Washington. And now it is waging a great heroic battle in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and even the crusaders' own homes.''

Al-Manar said on BBC: ''Let the entire world hear me. Our hostility to the Great Satan, America, is absolute. Regardless of how the world has changed after September 11, death to America will remain our reverberating and powerful slogan: Death to America.''

Al-Zarqawi said of America's leaders: ''They are aware that if the Islamic giant wakes up, it will not be satisfied with less than the gates of Rome, Washington, Paris, and London.''

Al-Muhajir, Osama bin Laden's latest lieutenant in Iraq, said: ''The fire has not and will not be put out and our swords, which have been colored with your blood, are thirsty for more of your rotting heads.''

Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, said, ''We have discovered how to hit the Jews where they are most vulnerable. The Jews love life; so that is what we shall take away from them. We are going to win because they love life and we love death.''

And then, Mr. Speaker, we hear a Democrat Member of this body say, ''The savagery of terrorists is not relevant.'' Even the most senior Democrat in this House is quoted as saying ''I don't take sides for or against Hezbollah or for or against Israel.''

Mr. Speaker, a blind relativism that deliberately ignores all truth and equates merciless terrorism with free nations defending themselves and their innocent citizens is more dangerous to humanity than terrorism itself, and it is proof that liberals completely misunderstand the enemy that we face.

Osama bin Laden's deputy, al-Zawahiri, made clear shortly after 9/11 in his book ''Knights Under the Prophet's Banner,'' al Qaeda's most important short-term strategic goal is to seize control of a state, or part of a state, somewhere in the Muslim world. He wrote, quote, ''Confronting the enemies of Islam and launching jihad against them require a Muslim authority established on Muslim land. Without achieving this, our actions will mean nothing.''

Mr. Speaker, such a jihadist state would be the ideal launching pad for future attacks on the West.

Bin Laden himself once again has stated: ''The whole world is watching this war and the two adversaries. It is either victory and glory or misery and humiliation.''

Mr. Speaker, the terrorists regard Iraq as the central front in their war against humanity. And if we are to understand our enemy and this war, we must understand that Iraq is the central front in our war against jihad. Our courageous and noble soldiers understand that very well and our enemy definitely understands that.

Osama bin Laden himself has said, ''The most important and serious issue today for the world is this Third World War . . . It is raging in the land of the two rivers, Iraq. The world's millstone and pillar is in Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate.''

Mr. Speaker, if Democrats are correct that the struggle in Iraq is not crucial to the winning of the war against Islamist jihad, then for God's sake I wish they would explain that to the terrorists.

Brink Lindsey has put it all so succinctly. He said, ''Here is the grim truth: We are only one act of madness away from a social cataclysm unlike anything our country has ever known. After a handful of such acts, who knows what kind of civilization breakdown might be in store?''

Mr. Speaker, we simply can no longer deny that we are fighting a war against an insidiously dangerous and evil ideology that is bent on the destruction of the Western world, and they would like nothing better than to decapitate this country by detonating a nuclear blast 100 yards from here. And to allow jihadists to declare victory in Iraq will only serve to hasten such a day.

Mr. Speaker, the free nations of the world once had opportunity to address the insidious rise of the Nazi ideology in its formative years when it could have been dispatched without great cost. But they delayed, and the result was atomic bombs falling on cities, 50 million people dead worldwide, and the swastika's shadow nearly plunging this planet into Cimmerian night.

Winston Churchill's words of warning far preceded such tragic events. He said, ''If you will not fight when you can easily win without bloodshed, if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not too costly, you may come to the moment when you will have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance of survival. There may be a worse moment. You may have to fight when there is no hope of victory because it is still better to perish than to live as slaves.''

If so-called enlightened Germans fell prey to the Nazi ideology, why do we not believe Third World Muslims can also fall prey in large numbers to this jihadist ideology? History does indeed repeat itself, Mr. Speaker, and each time the price goes up.

Jihadists believe they have a critical advantage over free people in the world. They believe their will is far stronger than ours and that they need only to persevere to break our resolve. Mr. Speaker, the message of this resolution has only encouraged them in that belief.

So today in this Chamber, we each have some grave questions to ask ourselves, and the answers will profoundly affect future American generations. We need to ask ourselves first, not whether the Nation should have gone to war but whether the Nation should lose this war.

Will jihadists break the will of the world's free people or not? Will they be able to hide long enough to gain access to nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction? If we do allow nations like Iran to gain nuclear weapons, what will we tell our children when they face nuclear jihad, perhaps even in this generation? If liberals in this body are willing to see freedom defeated in Iraq, are they willing to take responsibility for what will almost certainly follow? If this entire Nation was riveted and heartbroken when two airplanes hit two buildings in New York, how will we

feel when an entire American city is in nuclear flames?

If Speaker PELOSI and other Democrats are willing to vote against monitoring terrorist conversations on the telephone, or tracking their financial transactions, or protecting our border from terrorist insurgency, or effectively interrogating terrorists in custody, or sending reinforcements to our troops on the battlefield, then the question that cries for an answer is what are they willing to do to defeat Islamic terrorism? What is their plan?

Mr. Speaker, there is no substitute for victory. If we surrender Iraq to Islamist jihadists, we will supercharge their recruitment efforts in the Middle East and all over the planet, and our children will pay an unspeakable price, and history will condemn this generation for unspeakable irresponsibility in the face of such an obvious threat to human peace.

So, Mr. Speaker, before we vote on this resolution, may we consider carefully the words of Abraham Lincoln as he sought to steel the resolve of Americans in another great and historic struggle. He said, ''Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the last generation.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I would now yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. BEAN), a member of the Financial Services Committee.

Ms. BEAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts, for yielding.

I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 63 and in opposition to the proposed troop surge in Iraq.

When I visited Iraq in 2005, like the soldiers I met there, I was hopeful that democratic elections would allow Iraq to move forward as a unified sovereign nation. While the elections demonstrated a commitment from the Iraqi people to do that, the situation on the ground has instead worsened, sectarian violence has increased, and the escalating death toll for American and Allied troops and the Iraqi people demand serious scrutiny of our strategy in Iraq.

When I met with the President's military and national security advisers last month to learn about their new plan, I anticipated that a new course would be proposed. Regrettably, this surge does not constitute a new course.

We have tried multiple troop surges. After the most recent surge last summer, conducted in Baghdad, the U.S. military declared that it had ''not met our overall expectations of sustaining a reduction in levels of violence.'' In fact, attacks increased by 22 percent, and already after 20 percent of the current surge has been deployed, violence has not decreased.

Instead of sending more troops, our military mission in Iraq must shift from attempting to secure Iraq to better equipping and training the Iraqi Security Forces so they can secure their own country. Like most Americans, I have supported the President's objective that we will stand down as the Iraqis stand up. We have already trained nearly 325,000 Iraqi Security Forces toward that end.

For 4 years Americans have seen the brave men and women of our Armed Forces perform their duty courageously. We have seen over 3,100 American husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters make the ultimate sacrifice, including 116 servicemen and women from my State of Illinois. We have seen $400 billion in hard-earned tax dollars invested in this effort to support those fighting. What we haven't seen is real accountability for results.

That is why I have joined my colleagues in the Blue Dog Coalition to introduce the Iraq War Cost Accountability Resolution. This resolution requires accountability in four ways: spending accountability; contractual accountability; budget accountability; and, importantly, Iraqi accountability.

To ensure spending accountability, this resolution requires the Department of Defense Inspector General to provide an accounting of all military and reconstruction spending and to report to Congress every 90 days, including how and where our tax dollars are being spent, transparency in contracting and procurement methods, and levels of participation from other countries, additional funding required, and, importantly, sanctions applied for fraud, abuse, and war profiteering.

To enforce contractual accountability, a select committee akin to the Truman Committee would be created to investigate the awarding of contracts and their execution to protect our tax dollars. To provide budget accountability, this resolution requires funding requests for the war in Iraq in fiscal 2008 and beyond must come through the regular appropriations process, not continued emergency supplementals. And to demand Iraqi accountability, the administration should firmly condition further American financial and military support upon steady and measurable improvement in Iraqi progress towards principal responsibility for internal security in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, increasing the number of troops without increasing the level of accountability perpetuates the same policy that has led to this crisis in Iraq.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support both of these resolutions. Instead of sending more troops, let us provide the high degree of accountability that the American people demand and that our valiant men and women serving in Iraq deserve.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 7 minutes to Dr. GINGREY of Georgia.

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of our troops who are faithfully serving our Nation in harm's way. Therefore, I must oppose this resolution brought to the floor by the Democrats because it offers no plan, no strategy, and no hope for victory. In fact, it does nothing but risk demoralizing our troops.

Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that Republicans and Democrats alike recognize mistakes have been made in Iraq and neither side of the aisle is happy with where we are today. But rather than offering solutions to move us forward or engage in a productive debate on alternative strategies, the Democrats have decided to propose what certainly seems to be a politically motivated resolution.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, what are we really accomplishing with this resolution? The answer is nothing. With this shameless stunt, the Democrats are locking down this body for 36 hours maybe in hopes of scoring political points by criticizing the President. But by using our troops as pawns in an attempt to gain political leverage, this resolution serves only to weaken troop morale while giving hope and comfort to the enemy.

□ 2315

In doing so, Mr. Speaker, the Democrats have done nothing to end the war or help our troops achieve victory.

Mr. Speaker, seeing as the Democrats have hijacked the Floor all week to debate this resolution, surely they must have an alternative to the President's plan. I will bet the American people are as eager as I am to hear about this new plan for success, their plan. Certainly my constituents in the Eleventh District of Georgia are waiting.

So what is their magic alternative? Mr. Speaker, here it is. It is the same on both sides. They don't have one. We have heard from members of the Democratic team threaten to cut funding, to cap troop levels or to compel a forced withdrawal. But where are those ideas in this resolution? I have read through its two brief paragraphs and I can assure you they aren't to be found.

Sadly, the Democrats lack the political will to fully engage in a meaningful debate on Iraq policy. They have refused to allow a vote on funding for the war which would give Members an opportunity to show support for our troops with actions and not empty words.

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the Democratic leadership is afraid to ask their Members to put their money where their mouths are and either vote yes or no to fund our troops and the mission. Isn't this why they have denied Republicans an opportunity to offer an alternative bill, or even a motion to recommit? They were for that last Thursday,

before being against it tonight. Sound familiar?

Apparently, Mr. Speaker, calls for funding cuts and troop withdrawals are good enough for newspaper headlines, but they are not good enough for votes on this House floor. Let me remind my colleagues that sound bites for the nightly news will do nothing to win this war against terror.

Mr. Speaker, America has a long tradition of standing on the right side of this fight for freedom, even when it is a difficult stand to make, and the right course of action today is to stand by the Iraqi people until their government, their police and military can ensure the security of their own nation.

As in any war, there have been setbacks in Iraq. But as in past wars, we will move forward with victory as our goal. This Democratic resolution is a thinly veiled attempt to sound the retreat. That amounts to an unacceptable act of playing politics with our national security.

Mr. Speaker, as you have heard over the past 2 days, this is a serious debate, with very serious ramifications. It is not simply a simple resolution as the Democrats would like to characterize it. But on one hand, we have a shot at victory. We have an opportunity to push back the cause of radical terrorism. On the other hand, we have a two paragraph, nonbinding resolution that is essentially a vote of no confidence in the commander in chief.

This is not the time for our majority party to cave in to their anti-war supporters of the liberal left and play politics with the security of the United States. This is a time for bold leadership and bold plans. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, neither is on display here today.

I hope for the sake of the American people, our troops and freedom-loving nations around this world, that this resolution's flimsy words are not taken as a substitute for America's long tradition and commitment to achieving victory.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to point out to my colleagues this poster on my left. These brave soldiers, Paul Saylor from Breman, Georgia; Justin Johnson from Rome, Georgia; Lieutenant Tyler Brown, a Georgia Tech graduate, the president of the student body; and Hayes Clayton, III, from Marietta, Georgia, all died for their country.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot turn our backs on them. We cannot say to their moms and dads, their brothers and sisters, their wives and their children, that we supported sending them into harm's way and they gave their lives for their country, and now we are saying it was for naught, it was for nothing, it was not worth it. We can't let that happen.

Mr. Speaker, I want my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join with me in voting down this meaningless resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of our troops, who are faithfully serving our Nation in harm's way. Therefore, I must oppose this resolution brought to the floor by the Democrats because it offers no plan, no strategy, and no hope for victory. In fact, it does nothing but risk demoralizing our troops.

Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that Republicans and Democrats alike recognize mistakes have been made in Iraq, and neither side of the aisle is happy with where we are today. But rather than offering solutions to move us forward, or engaging in a productive debate on alternative strategies, the Democrats have decided to propose what certainly seems to be a politically motivated non-binding resolution.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, what are we really accomplishing with this resolution? The answer is nothing. The Democrats are locking down this body for 36 hours—maybe in hopes of scoring political points by criticizing the President. But by using, our troops as pawns in an attempt to gain political leverage, this resolution serves only to weaken troop morale, while giving hope and comfort to the enemy.

And in doing so, Mr. Speaker, the Democrats have done nothing to end the war or to help our troops achieve victory.

Mr. Speaker, since the Democrats have hijacked the floor all week to debate this resolution, surely they must have an alternative to the President's plan. I'll bet the American people are as eager as I am to hear about this new plan for success. Certainly my constituents in the 11th District of Georgia are.

So what is their magic alternative? As far as I can tell, Mr. Speaker, they don't have one.

We've heard members of the Democrat team threaten to cut funding, cap troop levels, or compel a forced withdrawal. But where are those ideas in this resolution? I've read through its two brief paragraphs, and I can assure you—they aren't to be found.

Sadly, the Democrats lack the political will to fully engage in a meaningful debate on Iraq policy. They've refused to allow a vote on funding for the war, which would give Members an opportunity to show support for our troops with actions, not empty words.

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, the Democrat leadership is afraid to ask their members to put their money where their mouths are and vote ''yes'' or ''no'' to fund our troops and their mission.

Isn't this why they've denied Republicans an opportunity to offer an alternate bill, or even a motion to recommit with instructions?

They were for that last Thursday before now being against it. Sound familiar?

Apparently, Mr. Speaker, calls for funding cuts and troop withdrawal are good enough for newspaper headlines, but not for votes on the House floor. Let me remind my colleagues that sound bytes for the nightly news will do nothing to win this war on terror.

VICTORY

I can tell you one thing the Democrats aren't discussing here today, and that's victory. Victory in Iraq will result in a nation that can defend itself, govern itself, sustain itself, and be an ally against terrorism rather than a safe haven for terrorists. Victory should be the focus of our debate today, because victory is the goal of our military's efforts. One of my Democrat colleagues said yesterday that ''we have given war a chance.'' Well, Mr. Speaker, I retort that we must now, at this darkest hour, give victory a chance, rather than appeasement!

So I implore someone to please tell me how this resolution achieves any advancement toward victory.

Mr. Speaker, the President has offered a new idea that can help us achieve our goals in Iraq, so we can foster a more stable Middle East and yes, then bring our troops home to a grateful nation and the comfort of their families. This ''new way forward'' isn't perfect, nor will it make every Member of this body happy, but it is a reasonable plan which offers perhaps our last best chance to silence the insurgency, allow the Iraqi political apparatus to thrive, and help the region realize greater security and stability.

WHAT WOULD VICTORY ACCOMPLISH?

Mr. Speaker, when I look at this resolution, I feel as though I need to remind my colleagues on both sides of the aisle just what is at stake in this debate—and what is at stake with our victory or defeat in Iraq.

Victory in Iraq will deliver a blow to the cause of terrorism in the Middle East and across the world. Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups are hoping the U.S. will give up in Iraq, because that would make it easier for them to recruit, plan, and execute deadly acts of terrorism across the Middle East and even here in America. Victory, on the other hand, will deliver a tremendous blow to their unconscionable plans.

While all of us may worry about the next election, today's debate should focus on the next generation, and how the Congress will achieve security for the American people.

How soon we forget what it takes to keep our Nation safe, Mr. Speaker. Is it an accident that we have not had a terrorist attack on U.S. soil since 9/11? No! It is because our leaders have consistently stood up to the terrorists in word and action to show that the U.S. will not tolerate their ideology.

The war on terror rages today, and America can't give up our fight in Iraq, because it is crucial to our triumph over global terrorism.

CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE

Mr. Speaker, let me discuss in very clear terms the consequences of failure in Iraq.

Failure in Iraq—which is what this non-binding resolution will lead to—would mean: the collapse of a democratic Iraqi government, likely leading to mass killings and genocide in the nation. Al Qaeda and other terrorists groups would use this defeat to boost recruitment, and would use Iraq as a staging ground for deadly attacks—paid for with Iraqi oil revenue. Iran and Syria would exert tremendous influence over the region, an extremely dangerous proposition when you consider Iran's nuclear ambitions and Syria's continued disruption of the democratic process in Lebanon. Israel would be pushed into the sea, and the opportunity for democracy and freedom across the Middle East would be dealt a crippling, indeed deadly, blow.

These are the consequences of defeat. And these are the reasons we can't abandon our Iraqi friends just because we face difficult times. Instead, we must find bold solutions and have the will to carry them out.

Who said ''when the going gets tough, the tough get going?'' Maybe the Marines; certainly not the ''Out of Iraq'' House caucus.

MORE THAN A TROOP SURGE

Mr. Speaker, the Democrats' would have you believe the President's plan amounts to nothing more than a thoughtless troop surge. While a temporary troop increase is critical to the plan's success, the ''new way forward'' is a comprehensive plan that offers an array of

solutions vetted by our nation's top military minds and the Iraqi government.

GO IRAQI

For example, the plan includes elements of the ''Go Iraqi'' strategy advocated by Armed Services Ranking Member DUNCAN HUNTER and supported by many in this body—including myself—who serve on the Armed Services Committee.

We know we need more troops in Baghdad. The ''Go Iraqi'' strategy will make many of those troops Iraqi, including the redeployment of three Iraqi brigades to Baghdad. This achieves several important goals: it allows Iraqi units to become battle-hardened, which in turn allows U.S. troops to redeploy as Iraqi troops take their place; it shows the Iraqi people that their military is capable of protecting and defending the nation; and it builds rapport between the military and the people it is charged with protecting.

IRAQI PROMISES: MADE AND KEPT

The President's new plan was contingent on several promises from Prime Minister Maliki, and it is critically important that these promises are kept. So far, the Iraqi government has been true to its word, and we are making progress.

Prime Minister Maliki has pledged that he will institute new rules of engagement to give Iraqi commanders greater control of their forces and the ability to crack down on all militias, regardless of their religious sect. This may be the single most important aspect of the new strategy, as militias loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr will no longer operate unfettered and can be increasingly neutralized.

This new plan also recognizes that unemployment rates in Iraq are between 14 and 18 percent, which fuels participation in militias and death squads.

An essential part of the ''new way forward,'' therefore, requires economic development assistance, including a $10 billion commitment made by the Iraqi government.

New oil legislation will decrease fuel shortages, and there will be a more equitable distribution of oil revenues. The ''new way forward'' also calls for passing de-Ba'athification legislation, and holding provincial elections in the near future.

It is a shame that we are not debating any of these new ideas here today.

THE PLAN IS WORKING

Mr. Speaker, while the Democrats would have you believe the President's plan is doomed to failure, a January 19th Associated Press article indicates that the plan is already working.

The article notes, ''The arrest of a high-level aide to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in Baghdad came a day after Sadr's Mahdi Army fighters said they were under siege in their Sadr City stronghold as U.S. and Iraqi troops killed or seized key commanders. Further, two commanders of the Shiite militia said Prime Minister Maliki has stopped protecting the group.''

There are also reports that al-Sadr himself, accompanied by his military commanders, has fled the country for neighboring Iran.

And to address concerns voiced last evening by my friend from New York, Mr. WEINER, about how the new plan did nothing to address incursions by extremists along the Iranian border, Prime Minister Maliki has announced plans to seal the border with both Iran and Syria, ostensibly to keep al-Sadr out of the country.

SUPPORT FROM GENERALS

So Mr. Speaker, we are seeing results. And our Generals in charge say they need this new plan in order to achieve victory.

General Casey has consistently stated he will ask for the troops needed to accomplish our mission, something he says this new plan can achieve. In fact, General Petraeus stated in a recent Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing that he could not take over his new job and succeed without additional troops.

Mr. Speaker, I for one am more inclined to listen to our military commanders focused on winning this war than to the Democrat leadership focused, it seems, on winning something else.

SUPPORT FROM TROOPS

I am also inclined to listen to our troops. Mr. Speaker, as I have visited our men and women in uniform serving in Iraq, they have impressed upon me their dedication to achieving victory. And they know that cutting and running won't get the job done.

Captain Jim Modlin of Oceanport, New Jersey recently told the Washington Post that ''Pulling out now would be . . . worse than going forward with no changes. Sectarian violence would be rampant, democracy would cease to exist, and the rule of law would be decimated. It's not ''stay the course'' or ''cut and run'' or other political catchphrases. There are people's lives there . . . a simple solution just isn't possible.

Another soldier posted on a military blog that ''If the Democrats block these troops, we're screwed. We need them. We are as effective as we can be right now, but with more personnel we could be doing a lot more.''

SUPPORT FROM VETERANS

Mr. Speaker, our veterans have also voiced strong support for a meaningful discussion on Iraq.

Gary Kurpius, a Vietnam veteran and leader of the VFW recently stated, ''We have to let our generals be generals and wage this war as only they are trained to do . . . My generation learned the hard way that when military decisions are second-guessed by opinion polls or overruled by politicians, it is the common soldiers and families who pay the price.''

Yet against this tide of support, the Democrats it seems have decided to put politics front-and-center. So we debate not a solution for victory, but two paragraphs aimed at criticizing the President.

STAND BY OUR TROOPS

Mr. Speaker, America has a long tradition of standing on the right side of the fight for freedom, even when it is a difficult stand to make. And the right course of action today is to stand by the Iraqis until their government, police, and military can ensure the security of their own nation.

As in any war, there have been setbacks; but as in past wars, we will move forward with victory as our goal. This Democrat resolution is a thinly-veiled attempt to sound the retreat, and that amounts to the unacceptable act of playing politics with our national security.

Mr. Speaker, as you can tell, this is a serious debate with very serious ramifications.

On one hand, we have a shot at victory, an opportunity to push back the cause of radical terrorism. On the other hand, we have a two-paragraph non-binding resolution that is a vote of no confidence in our Commander in Chief. The potential impact this will have on troop morale and the overall success of the mission could truly be devastating.

This is not the time for our majority party to kowtow to their anti-war supporters of the liberal left and play politics with the security of the United States of America.

This is the time for bold leadership, and bold plans. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, neither is on display here today.

I hope—for the sake of the American people, our troops, and freedom-loving nations around the world—that this resolution's flimsy words are not taken as a substitute for America's long tradition of—and commitment to—achieving victory.

We owe it to them, their moms and dads, wives and children, brother and sisters.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me in voting ''no'' on this resolution.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would commend to my friends and colleagues who spoke previously that they take the time and review the National Intelligence Estimate that was released by the Bush administration in September of 2006, because the American intelligence agencies found that the American invasion and occupation of Iraq has helped spawn a new generation of Islamic radicalism and that the overall terrorist threat has grown. What we want to accomplish is to defeat terrorism, but we are not doing it with this strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. ELLSWORTH), a new Member of the House and a member of the Committee on Armed Services.

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

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, every day I am inspired by the unwavering will and determination of our fighting men and women who continue to serve with valor in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their commitment to serving our country represents the very best America has to offer and we owe them our debt of gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, wondered how this resolution would affect our troops. In recent hearings of the House Armed Services Committee, of which I am a member, when asked about the impact of this debate on our troops, General Peter Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a man I hold in very high regard, said, ''From the standpoint of our troops, I believe that they understand how our legislature works and that they understand there's going to be this kind of debate.'' But most importantly he told us, ''There is no doubt in my mind that the dialogue here in Washington strengthens our democracy. Period.''

Mr. Speaker, I had two Iraqi war veterans in my office this afternoon and I asked them about this resolution. They said, ''Congressman, let me tell you

what the guys over there think about. They think about doing their job, they think about staying alive, and they think about getting home to their families.''

General Pace and these soldiers are right. Our democracy is strengthened when we engage in vigorous debate about solutions to the challenges that we face, and there is not a more pressing, more important challenge before us than this war right now.

But let me be perfectly clear: I strongly and I unequivocally support our troops, and I challenge anybody that questions my patriotism. As a result, we must provide the equipment and the resources that our troops on the ground need to meet their mission safely. Their safety should never be compromised by our disagreements here in Washington, D.C.

Despite our differences, I believe the President is sincere in his desire to bring a successful end to the war in Iraq, but he has failed to convince me that sending these 21,000 additional troops represents a new or successful strategy. We went to Iraq under a failed plan in 2003, and we can't afford to take the same failed path.

More importantly, we owe our fighting men and women better than what we are giving them. We need to know the goals for success are well-defined; that benchmarks are in place for both the Iraqis and for America; and that the Iraqi government will live up to their end of the bargain. So far they have not, and there is no indication that says they will now.

For too long, Mr. Speaker, our country has gone without questioning whether there is a better way forward in Iraq, and before we send these 21,000 men and women into harm's way, we must ask ourselves these questions. And I remind you, I asked General Pace these questions myself and asked him to look me in the eye and answer these. Does this plan produce less violence and fewer roadside bombs? Does it ensure our military can meet the other threats to our security and homeland across the country? Does it move us closer to the day when our fighting men and women can come home and America is at peace? I don't believe this plan answers any of those in the affirmative or with a yes.

Over the last few weeks, I have listened to generals, I have heard from constituents and talked to military families, and after countless hours of consideration, my gut tells me that I can't believe that this plan is the answer.

Unfortunately, this plan still gives no clear indication of the consequence if the Iraqis fail to meet their commitment that they made to us over the last few years. To date, our military has done everything we have called on them to do. Yet the Iraqi leaders have not lived up to their commitments.

I believe the time has come for the Iraqi government to step up and halt the sectarian violence, find the political will to solve their own problems and take charge of their own destiny. That is ultimately the key to finding a successful conclusion to this war and bringing our brave men and women home.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. WILSON), another new Member and a valued member of the House Committee on Financial Services.

Mr. WILSON of Ohio. Thank you, Mr. DELAHUNT.

Mr. Speaker, the costs keep climbing. Thousands of our young brave men and women have been killed. Next month we enter the fifth year of this war, a war that has lasted longer than World War I or World War II. Hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayer money has been spent, and some of that money seems to have just disappeared into the desert air. The costs keep climbing, and nobody, not a single Republican or Democrat, can deny that.

The question before us now is clear: Should we escalate this war and send 21,500 more of our sons and daughters to referee a civil war in Iraq? The American people have spoken out for change, and many of us here have listened carefully. But escalating this war does not reflect the hard reality at home or on the ground in Iraq.

Saying ''support our troops'' is easy, but actually standing up for our troops overseas and their families here at home demands so much more from us. We must ask the tough questions and provide real support, instead of empty rhetoric.

Supporting our troops requires that we protect their bodies and lives with the best armor available. Supporting our troops means equipping them with the most reliable weapons and effective training. Supporting our troops does not stop when they come home from the war. It is the Nation's solemn obligation to care for those who have given so much. Supporting our troops means we must ask ourselves the hard question, should we send more of our sons and daughters into the constant crossfire of Iraq's civil war? The answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, it comes down to supporting our troops. In addition to the best armor, the proper respect and the right benefits, our troops deserve the right plan. In fact, nothing matters more than the right plan. Our heroic soldiers have done everything that we have asked them to do. Without a realistic plan to guide them, we cannot say that we are supporting our troops.

While sacrificing health care for children and pharmaceutical needs for our seniors, this administration has shipped 363 tons of cash on pallets to Iraq. When it got there, the American officials turned it over to Iraqis, without any idea of where they were spending it or what they were doing with it. That defies common sense. It should not be a surprise that nearly $9 billion are missing.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the costs keep climbing. As high as the cost is in dollars, it pales compared to the high price many of our military families have had to pay. Our troops are overstretched, their families are overstressed, and there is no relief in sight. Every one of our active duty military brigades have served at least a year long in Iraq or Afghanistan. When a mother or father or husband or wife is abroad for a year, it places tremendous strain on the family. Too many families have been torn apart by this war. The cost of broken families will never be entered into an accountant's ledger, but the cost is too high, and it just keeps climbing.

This month, one young man from my district was killed in Iraq. I know that this country will feel his loss. He left behind his parents, his wife and an infant son, Mr. Speaker, that he never had a chance to meet. I feel their loss deeply, and I ask all of my colleagues to remember that every man and woman that has been killed in Iraq cannot be replaced and leaves behind many people who depended on them.

The resolution before us today could not be any more clear. It states that the Congress will continue to support and protect our troops. I will never vote for any legislation that will endanger our troops in the field, and we will never vote to cut off funding that will help to compromise the safety of our men and women in uniform. But escalating this war and sending 21,500 more troops to referee a civil war is not the answer.

□ 2330

The American people have spoken and they demand that we support our troops with a real change in direction. As the voice of the people, Congress will make sure that this administration finally takes notice.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his concern and respect for the families and the soldiers that serve. He should know that there are many that are serving today in Iraq that agree with you.

Let me quote from a private in Baghdad who was shot at and who is enduring the vagaries and the vicissitudes of living every day in hell. This is what he had to say in a paper just recently.

''We can go get into a firefight and empty our ammo, but it doesn't accomplish much. This isn't our war. We're just in the middle.'' And that is Private First Class Zach Clausen.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. SHULER).

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in support of this resolution because for 4 years this administration has driven us down the wrong road in Iraq. The administration's newest proposal does nothing more than accelerate our pace further and further away from our obligation of stabilizing Iraq and getting our troops home.

Our men and women in uniform have performed bravely and done everything

asked of them. Yet, 4 years into this conflict, we have our troops driving unarmored humvees in enemy territory.

Meanwhile, our government cannot account for roughly $12 billion allocated for the war in Iraq. With that $12 billion, we could have made the following purchases for our men and women in harm's way: 80,000 armor kits for humvees; 16,000 armored security vehicles; 20 million bulletproof vests; 40 million helmets. That money is gone. It disappeared in a cloud of waste, fraud and incompetence that has engulfed this war from the beginning.

In the words of Three Star General Greg Newbold, ''Members of Congress, from both parties, defaulted in fulfilling their constitutional responsibility for oversight.''

Now, this administration wants Congress to rubber stamp an escalation and continuation of those same failed policies. Well, that time is over.

My fellow Blue Dogs and I have made a public commitment to root out war profiteering. We demand oversight. We demand accountability. We demand transparency. The Blue Dogs and I will do everything in our power to make sure when we say we are funding our troops, the money actually gets to our troops.

Mr. Speaker, our military defeated a terrible dictator. This is what they were asked to do, but for 4 years now, we have asked those same troops to rebuild a Nation, and we have asked them to do this without a plan.

Now, this administration has asked us to send over 20,000 more military troops to continue trying to rebuild Iraq, still with no plan. Mr. Speaker, that is wrong.

I believe it is the patriotic responsibility of every Member of Congress to ask those tough questions. I promised the people of Western North Carolina that I would ask those questions. I have been to the White House, I have been to the Pentagon, and I have been to the hearings, and I am not satisfied with the answers I am getting.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution we are debating is not a binding resolution, but the grief felt by families who have lost loved ones is binding. The physical and mental struggles of our returning troops are binding. The devastation caused to innocent people by the violence in Iraq is binding.

It is a moral outrage to continue sending troops into harm's way without a plan for success.

This administration must realize that military might alone is not enough to secure Iraq and end the civil war.

Victory in Iraq requires more than bullets and bombs. It requires the cooperation of the Iraqi government, increased regional diplomacy, and competent leadership at home.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (MR. ELLISON). The Chair allocates an additional 5 minutes per side at this time.

The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman very much for the time and for her charity and her leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening with a whirlwind of senses and emotions. I am disappointed. I am disappointed by the emptiness and the hypocrisy of this resolution.

Our men and women in the field, valiantly serving to protect our freedom, they deserve more than this. They deserve a real debate that honors the job that they are doing.

Instead, what we have this week is a resolution that is eight short lines, eight lines, that in their entirety stab at the motives and undermine the difficult work that our patriot military is doing. I am so disappointed in a majority party that has no more respect for our military than that.

This debate has been called historic, and historic it is. It is historic in its hypocrisy. If you truly believe that this is not winnable with what has been proposed, then it is incumbent upon you to do everything that you can do to stop it and stop it now. Doing anything less belies your duty and your responsibility.

This resolution says we support you but we are going to hang you out to dry, and this from the folks who say they want a new direction. What a disgrace to the integrity of this body. How disappointing.

I am saddened. I am saddened by the apparent fact that everything done by the majority is absolutely political, all form, no substance. Is there nothing above politics? Surely the defense of our Nation and the preservation of freedom should be above politics.

How did a once proud party, the party of FDR, who said, ''We have nothing to fear but fear itself,'' and the party of JFK, who said, ''Let every Nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty,'' how did a once proud party drop to such a depth? How very sad.

I am astounded by the seeming lack of desire to study and to call upon historical events for a basis upon which to develop policy. America is a great and a good Nation, and we are great and good because we have been blessed to have been led by men and women who until now did their level best to utilize all the information available.

I urge my colleagues to be true to the oath that we took just a few weeks ago. Don't you remember, we stood right here and said, ''I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic?'' All enemies, foreign and domestic.

What is a glimpse of the recent history of our current enemy? 1983, a truck bomb kills 241 Marines in their barracks in Beirut; 1993, six killed in the first World Trade Center bombing; 2000, al Qaeda's attack on the destroyer USS *Cole*, killing 17 American sailors; and then September 11, 2001, al Qaeda's hijackers fly planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, while passengers on a fourth plane bring it to a crash landing in Pennsylvania, total number killed, 2,973.

Since then, there have been attacks in England and Spain and elsewhere, and just last summer, Scotland Yard in Britain arrested a couple who planned to destroy 10 civilian planes over the Atlantic. They were going to use their 8-month-old baby to disguise the bomb material as baby food. We as a Nation are ill-prepared for the ferocity and the hatred of people who will kill their own baby in order to get a chance to kill us.

American public policy failed to grasp the scope of the threat posed by radical Islam until September 11, 2001. On September 11, we reaped the consequences of decades of inaction against the very real threat posed by militant Islam.

These are extremely challenging times. Some would credibly suggest that these are more difficult times than we have faced since World War II, with the demographics of our society, the changing nature of the world and globalization and the nature of our competitors, all overshadowed by the nature of our avowed enemy, those who have publicly stated their goal to see the end of the Western world and America and who are working to secure the means to accomplish that goal.

I am perplexed. I am perplexed by the apparent inability of many in Congress to grasp this fundamental fact. We are currently facing an enemy who is calculating, patient, indiscriminate and murderous, an enemy actively waging war against us.

That is not just an opinion. That is not just my opinion. That is their stated purpose and fact.

In their own words, Osama bin Laden said, ''Hostility toward America is a religious duty, and we hope to be rewarded for it by God . . . I am confident that Muslims will be able to end the legend of the so-called superpower that is America.''

Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman said, ''Oh, you Muslims everywhere, sever the ties of their Nation, tear them apart, ruin their economy, instigate against their corporations, destroy their embassies, attack their interests, sink their ships, and shoot down their airplanes. Kill them in land, at sea, and in the air, kill them wherever you find them.''

So the impact of this resolution, Mr. Speaker, is to give aid and comfort to the enemy and to dishearten our own military.

In a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on January 23, General David Petraeus, now commanding officer in Iraq, agreed that a resolution of disapproval for this new strategy would ''give the enemy encouragement.''

What are the consequences of failure? The consequences of failure would be catastrophic to the region, to the United States, and yes, to the world. The consequence of the next step of this majority party plan is defeat. They may say it is inevitable or unavoidable, but it is, nonetheless, a strategy for defeat.

What message does that send to our allies around the world? What will the Chinese think of our commitment to Taiwan? Will the North Korean, the Iranians, the Syrians, the Venezuelans, will they be more cautious or will they be bolder after an American defeat?

It is inconceivable to me how a remarkably weakened United States in the eyes of the world is a good thing for us or will result in a less emboldened Iran or North Korea or al Qaeda. The consequences of failure are clearly unacceptable.

So I am disappointed, I am saddened, I am astounded and I am perplexed, but I am also enthusiastic and I am optimistic, Mr. Speaker. I am enthusiastic in my support of our valiant men and women who defend our freedom day in and day out, and I am optimistic because I believe so strongly in the United States and in her people, and I am optimistic because I am certain that they will appreciate and recognize the consequences of this debate and the remarkable differences in our approach and our desire to defend America.

Thomas Paine said, ''He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.''

So, Mr. Speaker, let us honor our troops. Let us honor all who work for freedom on our behalf. Let us work together for liberty. Let us recall and recommit ourselves to our oath and our duty to defend our blessed Nation. It is that action, and that action alone, with the grace of God, that will ensure the wonder and the survival of our great Nation.

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Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia, a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Mr. BISHOP.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I support the troops, their families, and those who have sacrificed so much in this war. But like others who supported the Iraq efforts in the past, I have serious reservations about the President's new way forward.

On Friday, this House will vote on a resolution asking Members to support our troops but oppose the President's plan to send 21,500 more troops to Iraq. For me, this will be a sobering moment. I have spent many days agonizing over the issue, and I do not take lightly the judgment to rebuke the decision of the President, our Commander in Chief. But I have sent off and welcomed home thousands of soldiers at Fort Benning. I have seen the anguish on the faces of families as they watch their loved ones march off towards the uncertainty and peril that awaited them in Iraq and Afghanistan. I have seen the troops return home to those same families, their faces reflecting the elation, relief, and joy of seeing their loved ones safe at home. I have seen the veterans return with Purple Hearts, having lost arms, legs, and suffering from the mental trauma that results from war and the adverse impacts on their families. I have also stood and listened to Taps played over the bodies of too many who have returned in flag-draped coffins. Mr. Speaker, it is time for a change.

The situation in Iraq has become very grave. Like General Schoomaker and countless others, I believe we should not surge without a purpose, and that purpose should be measurable in its outcome. Thus far, the President has not set forth a clear marker against which the purpose and the outcome can be measured. Previous increases in troop strength have not brought a reduction in violence or quelling of sectarian strife. Rather, the problems have intensified, casualties have increased, and political situations show more cracks, corruption, and signs of instability every day.

There are those who say we should not oppose the President's plan without presenting an alternative. I think that may be a fair challenge, but there is another way. We need a new strategy that is based on redeployment rather than further military engagement, one that is centered on handing Iraq back to the Iraqis. As Congressman MURTHA has stated: Iraq cannot make the political progress necessary for its stability and security until U.S. forces redeploy. To achieve stability in Iraq and the region, we must redeploy from Iraq.

Why, you might ask? 91 percent of the Sunnis, 74 percent of the Shia want us out. 70 percent of Americans want us out. 72 percent of Americans who served in Iraq last year believe that we should be out by now. 61 percent of Iraqis approve of attacks on U.S. led forces. They see us as occupiers and want us out. The longer we stay, the more troops we send, the more violence we see, and the more we help recruiting of radical extremists. So we must redeploy first from Saddam's palaces in Baghdad, then from the cities, the factories, and universities. We must give the country back to the Iraqis and let them govern themselves and rebuild.

Next, we must execute a robust and diplomatic effort, and we must regain our credibility by denouncing aspirations for permanent bases. We must shut down Guantanamo and bulldoze Abu Ghraib prison. These are black eyes on the face of our international credibility. We must articulate clearly a policy of no torture, no exceptions. Then, we must engage dialogue with Iraq and all of its neighbors to promote investment of resources and cooperation for security by the other Arab countries in the region.

Most importantly, we need to repair and restore our strategic military reserves that have already been stressed to the breaking point. Because of the large force already in Iraq, Army ground forces here at home are not mission ready. This is because of both equipment and personnel shortages. The National Guard that remains at home is woefully unready to meet their statutory obligations based on natural disasters, wildfires, terrorism, and other threats to the homeland. The large presence in Iraq has drained readiness and equipment and personnel from the rest of our military. The surge will cost us dearly in billions of dollars and time, and we desperately need to repair, to reconstitute, and to reset our forces to face other significant threats at home and around the world.

We cannot stay the course we are on. We must change. Support our troops and our long-term national security by voting for this resolution.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of the time to the gentleman from Rhode Island, a member of the House Appropriations Committee and a valued member of the caucus, Mr. PATRICK KENNEDY.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, my uncle said a generation ago: If we examine the history of the conflict, we find the dismal story repeated time after time. Every time, at every crisis, we have denied that anything was wrong; sent more troops; and issued more confident communiques. Every time, we have been assured that this one last step would bring victory. And every time, the predictions and promises have failed and been forgotten, and the demand has been made once again for just one more step up the ladder. And once again the President tells us that we are going to win; victory is coming.''

My Uncle Robert Kennedy made this statement in March of 1968. It took another 5 years and 37,455 American lives before a United States President was withdrawing Americans out of Vietnam and stopping that war.

I am here tonight to say that the American people and this Congress are going to say ''no'' to this President when it comes to repeating that mistake.

There are those who will disparage this amendment and who say that this is a nonbinding resolution. But this resolution says that we are going to reject this President's doubling down on the gambling of American lives, and this foolish policy which has sent over 3,125 soldiers to their deaths, over 23,417 wounded soldiers back home, and hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis to their graves and countless more also injured.

We are saying in this resolution that we either have to start digging ourselves out of this hole, or we are going to start rueing the day when we have failed to act tonight to start changing course.

This administration's bullheaded insistence, bullheaded insistence on ideology over strategy is what has gotten us into this mess, and now that same stubbornness is counseling us to send still more soldiers and more Marines into an Iraqi civil war.

Our service men and women have been heroic. They have been confronted with repeated civilian failures of leadership, ill equipped and under equipped, and yet in increasingly untenable positions they have been unflinching and have been uncomplaining in their shouldering of every burden we have asked of them, and they have done it with dignity and professionalism. But it is not right. It is not right to ask them, to ask the military to bear the burden of the responsibility of solving someone else's civil war. It is not right, and it won't work.

Instead of closing our eyes and crossing our fingers and giving this President a rubber stamp for an endless civil war in Iraq, we should be beginning to move our country back to a commonsense policy of strength through leadership.

Our choice tonight is clear: Keep digging, or climb our way out of this hole. I think this Congress will decide to start climbing our way out.

And there will be many who will say, what will we do then? I will say, well, maybe we will propose to fence off the funds as many have suggested. That will be a debate for another day. That will be a debate for another day whether we will fence off the funds. But tonight will be the debate, and tomorrow will be the decision as to whether we will vote to go in that direction.

So you can say it is a meaningless, nonbinding resolution all you want, but it is the first conversation as to which direction we are going to go, and that is the direction we have to decide, and I vote that we go in the direction of starting to move our way and our troops out of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, "if we examine the history of the conflict, we find the dismal story repeated time after time. Every time—at every crisis—we have denied that anything was wrong; sent more troops; and issued more confident communiques. Every time, we have been assured that this one last step would bring victory. And every time, the predictions and promises have failed and been forgotten, and the demand has been made again for just one more step up the ladder. . . . And once again the President tells us that 'we are going to win'; 'victory' is coming."

My uncle, Robert Kennedy, spoke these words in March 1968, It took another 5 years and another 37,455 American lives before a U.S. President finally withdrew American troops from Vietnam.

I will not stand by, the American people will not stand by, and allow the President to repeat that mistake.

Some disparage this resolution because it's nonbinding. But with due respect, I couldn't disagree more. This resolution represents a fundamental policy choice by this Congress.

It's about whether you agree with doubling down the President's high stakes gamble with American lives.

This resolution poses a simple choice. After 4 years, after 3,125 deaths, after more than 23,417 wounded, are we digging our hole in Iraq even deeper, or are we strong enough to start climbing out?

We need a stronger America, a more secure America and that begins with a rejection of the failed strategy in Iraq.

It has now been nearly 4 years since the President declared that in Iraq, our mission was accomplished.

Four years of disintegration. Four years of unfounded insistence that the turning point is right around the corner.

Are we digging deeper, or climbing out?

We have watched a child hug their parents tight on the tarmac—only to have to let go as Morn or Dad is deployed for the second, third, or even fourth time.

We have stood at the graveside with a grieving family as a Gold Star mother accepts a folded American flag.

We have visited our Nation's newest veterans in the hospital, their bodies and minds scarred by the horrors of war.

Are we digging deeper, or climbing out?

Each day we all see, with our own eyes, the carnage and the chaos that has become the norm in Iraq.

The administration's bull-headed insistence on ideology over strategy has led us to where we are today. And now, that same stubbornness is counseling some to send still more of our soldiers and marines into an Iraqi civil war.

Our current course is failing in Iraq. It's failing the bigger struggle against our terrorist enemies. It's failing our troops and their families. And it's failing our core values as Americans.

I won't settle for that failure. We must change course. We must begin to climb out of the hole in Iraq.

Democrats, Republicans, generals, and most importantly, the American people now see that it is time for a new plan; it is time to embrace a new approach.

Our service men and women have been heroic. Confronted with repeated civilian failures of leadership, underequipped, and in an increasingly untenable position, our troops have not flinched, they have not complained, they have shouldered every burden we ask of them with dignity and professionalism.

But it is not right to place upon our military the responsibility of solving someone else's civil war. It's not right, and it won't work.

Instead of closing our eyes, crossing our fingers, and giving the President a rubber stamp for endless war in Iraq, we should begin moving our country back to a commonsense policy of strength through leadership.

Our strong leaders of the last century, like Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Reagan, recognized that while American military might was important, American values were our greatest strength.

We rallied the world in the Second World War and defeated the Soviets in the cold war on the strength of our Nation's democratic ideals. For the entire 20th century, we led by our example, and by the force of our principles.

While military action will continue to be a necessary component of our current struggle, ultimate victory against this generation of enemies will similarly be won not on the battlefield, but in the minds of millions around the world. That victory is impossible while we are in the middle of Iraq's civil war.

Our choice today is clear. Keep digging or climb out? If we decide to begin climbing out, as I think we will, there are debates yet to come about the best way to do that—whether we should fence off funds to prevent an escalation, for example. I look forward to those conversations. But today is a more fundamental question about the direction of our country.

We can withdraw from Iraq without withdrawing from the fight. We can be strong enough to climb out of that hole. For our troops, for their families, and for our Nation's strength and security, I urge a "yes" vote.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ELLISON). The Chair will recognize both sides for 2 additional minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to consume the remaining 2 minutes. And I would like to say to all Members that although the debate tonight may have seemed uncivil at times, this is the wonderful process that we have here in democracy in this wonderful country, my adopted homeland. And my colleague from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT) and I disagree on so many issues, and yet we understand that this is indeed the greatest country in the world. We want peace and stability to all oppressed people throughout the world.

I happen to believe that the mission of the United States of America and the mission of the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform is a noble one. It is noble to stand up for freedom and for democracy; it is noble to fight against the radical Islamic Jihadists, who I believe do want to destroy our country, who want to destroy our allies like Israel, and want to destroy our way of life. I believe that the mission is just and I think that those who say we cannot stay the course, then how could they be against the decision of the President to send reinforcements? Because the decision of the President says that staying the course is not the right motion for the United States to make. We want to change the course. We want a new way forward. And the way forward is to send reinforcements to those brave men and women who are wearing proudly our Nation's uniform, who are standing in harm's way, and we want to give them everything that they need to succeed in their mission.

I have been to Iraq as have many Members and I have come to understand what their mission has been and they say, ''Don't just say we support our troops. Say you support our mission. Don't leave us out there in the field.''

And as I said in my previous remarks, Mr. Speaker, this is going to be an escalation and we will soon be cutting off funding for our troops and leave them in harm's way. That is a dangerous path.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with my friend and colleague from Florida. This is a special country

and a special Nation and our men and women who are serving us in Iraq are special to us, to all of us.

The article that I alluded to earlier and mentioned the name of Private Clausen, I would like to quote from other soldiers who are in Baghdad currently who are fighting, are in the combat, and their observations, and I would encourage my colleagues on both sides to listen to their words. They get it. They understand. They know what is happening on the ground. They know the reality of Iraq.

Lieutenant Antonio Hardy. These are his words:

''To be honest, it's going to be like this for a long time to come, no matter what we do. I think some people in America don't want to know about all this violence, about all the killings. The people back home are shielded from it. They get it sugar-coated.''

Sergeant Herbert Gill:

''What is victory supposed to look like? Every time we turn around and go into a new area, there's somebody waiting to kill us. Once more raids start happening, they'll melt away. And then 2 or 3 months later, when we leave and we say it's a success, they'll come back.''

Our troops get it.

I referred earlier to Private Zack Clausen. Let me repeat his words: ''We can get into a firefight and empty our ammo, but it doesn't accomplish much. This is not our war—we're in the middle.''

Listen to these voices. These are not the voices that come and appear before us in congressional hearings. These are our brothers, our children, our sons, our daughters that are serving every day in Baghdad. Let's listen to the troops.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a profound debt of gratitude for our men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our brave soldiers are remarkable. They find themselves in a foreign land with regional conflicts that date back over a thousand years. However, they don't run and hide. They fight. They risk their lives helping to encourage and teach the Iraqis to take over their own destiny.

Our Nation's sons and daughters deserve nothing short of unconditional gratitude and support from their government and the American people. As long as I am in Congress, our soldiers will have an ally.

As a veteran, and a father, I will always fight to protect those who defend their country. I will fight for equipment and supplies. I will fight for their safety and protection. I will make sure they return home to their loved ones as quickly as possible. And I pledge they will NOT be forgotten once they return home.

But I will not support sending over 20,000 more young men and women into a fight without a plan to win and get them home. We cannot send more Americans into harm's way to instill a peace that the Iraqis are not willing to seek for themselves.

The solutions now are political not military. The Iraq Study Group urged the president to pursue a diplomatic solution alongside our military efforts.

But this president has decided to ignore the diplomatic side of the equation. This administration has squandered their credibility by losing billions in reconstruction funds, failing to adequately equip our troops, and failing to develop a clear plan for reconstruction in Iraq.

It is time for the Iraqi people to stand up and for the United States to begin a phased redeployment to protect American interests and take our troops out of the direct line of fire.

In closing, this war has created a new generation of veterans with new disabilities not seen in past wars. Adding insult to injury, the president's recent budget proposal lacks adequate funding for our veterans returning home. Researching post-traumatic stress disorder, improving suicide prevention, and providing adequate funding for prosthetics are crucial budget needs to serve our new veterans.

On a recent trip to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, I met with several of our wounded soldiers. I pledge to them—and to all our men and women in uniform—that your country will take care of you. And I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in fervent support of the brave men and women of our Armed Forces currently serving in Iraq. While American soldiers and Marines courageously risk their lives to confront a determined enemy in Iraq, the Democrat leadership in Congress offers this resolution. The spineless resolution under consideration would undermine our military commanders' plan for victory in this ongoing struggle.

This act of political posturing strikes me as inconsistent with pledges of support for our troops. We cannot simultaneously claim to support the troops while calling into question the validity of their mission. The question, Madam Speaker, quite simply, is this: to fund or not to fund. If this Congress intends to provide our service men and women with the funds they need to achieve their mission, and we must, it follows that funding ought to go hand-in-hand with resolute commitment in support of their current mission.

If not this plan, what plan? Before you answer that, recognize that Congress is not, and has never been, tasked with administering a war. No successful war in the history of mankind has ever been managed by the legislative branch of any government. And no credible alternative for victory in Iraq has emerged from any member of this institution.

I find it curious that not a single Senator opposed the confirmation of General Petraeus as Commanding General of our troops in Iraq. General Petraeus is the coauthor of the Army's new official counterinsurgency doctrine that this resolution seeks to undermine. Yet, only weeks later, this body seeks to pull the rug out from under General Petraeus through this resolution. Such political posturing is shameful, but unfortunately it is anything but petty, as the consequences could be deadly.

Members of Congress may be able to convince themselves of all sorts of contradictory positions and logical inconsistencies through double-speak, but our service members know weakness when they see it. Thank God our troops are men and women of resolve and integrity. If you want to endanger even more Americans in the field and usher in an American defeat in Iraq, the surest way to do so is to demonstrate a lack of commitment from this House, and therein embolden the enemies our troops are battling right now.

I don't believe that's what anybody in this body wants, so I urge my colleagues to consider the consequences of support for this ill-conceived resolution. This is a time of war, one that is not of our choosing. Militant Islamists have been at war with America for decades, and they have grown more dangerous each year, as we tragically learned a little more than five years ago.

With overwhelming bipartisan determination, we voted to authorize military action in Iraq in 2002. Retreat from our current mission would communicate to Al Qaeda and jihadists around the world that the United States is fainthearted, and we could expect more horrific attacks on American soil than we saw on 9/11.

Let me be clear—I am troubled by the last year's increased level of violence in Iraq; we all are. But this resolution can only exacerbate the problem. Our service men and women deserve better from us. And we, Madam Speaker, regardless of party, are better than this.

May God bless our troops.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3 of House Resolution 157, further proceedings on the concurrent resolution will be postponed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mr. WELCH of Vermont (during consideration of H. Con. Res. 63) from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110–13) on the resolution (H. Res. 161) providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CRAMER (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for February 13, on account of a death in the family.

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 Member (at the request of Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. GINGREY, for 5 minutes, February 16.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Mrs. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a joint resolution of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.J. Res. 20. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2007, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.