Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this

resolution. I have been in this body 19 years, and I did not support

setting artificial dates to remove our troops from Bosnia, Somalia,

Kosovo, East Timor, Macedonia and all the other times that we have

deployed our troops.

In fact, even when we were told back in 1997, the year after we

entered Bosnia, that our troops would be home by Christmas, I did not

rise to bring them home. We were told in Christmas of 1998 they would

be home and Christmas of 1999. The fact is we still have troops in the

Balkans. They have been there 10 years, even though it was not part of

the original plan.

Mr. Speaker, all of us support our troops, but I want to tell my

colleagues, in my 19 years I learned a lesson of supporting the troops

from the gentleman from Pennsylvania. He took me under his wing when I

came here as a freshman 19 years ago. I have traveled with him around

the world. I have seen his personal dedication to the men and women who

serve.

Now, there are many others in this body on both sides of the aisle

that we can say the same thing about, but I want to stand up as a

Representative from the other side of Pennsylvania and tell the story

of Jack Murtha who epitomizes what our military's all about. I wish I

could say I have been to Landstuhl, a medical facility in Germany, as

many times as Jack Murtha has been there.

I wish I could say that weekly I would go over to Walter Reed

Hospital and meet with the troops as Jack Murtha has done week after

week after week.

I wish I could say I have gone and held the hands of the wives and

the children of the sailors at Bethesda as Jack Murtha has done.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say that I have done all that, but I

cannot. Jack Murtha is one of a kind. He is an example for all of us in

this body, and none of us should ever think of questioning his motives,

his desires or support for our American troops.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say I have been here 19 years. I have

been here with Republican and Democrat Presidents. Yes, Jack Murtha's

been there. He stood up when Bill Clinton tried to cut the funding for

our troops, and he stood with us on some very tough votes. He stood up

with us on the tough policy questions. He was with us on missile

defense. He was with us when others in his party would not be with us

on defense and security issues. On some very tough leadership spots

Jack Murtha was there, and for the 5 years that President Bush has been

President, I cannot count on my hands the number of times Jack Murtha

has stood with our President in supporting our troops in supporting

more money, in supporting the policies that give us the kind of

capability that we need.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a sad state today. We are in a tough time with

our troops. They are wondering what is going on back here. It is not

about Jack Murtha trying to undermine anyone, just as I and others

would not

have tried to do that in the other 40 deployments in the 19 years that

I have been here, but it is wrong, Mr. Speaker, that a gentleman with

the reputation and leadership of Jack Murtha should have to wait 5

months to get a response to a letter expressing his concerns to the

administration. That is not right.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would hope we would all come together, and I would

hope that our Commander in Chief would invite the good gentleman from

Pennsylvania down to the White House to have a discussion about how we

can move forward together to support the troops and win the day in Iraq

and Afghanistan.