Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening in opposition to this

resolution calling for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from

Iraq. It is a shame that some members of the House leadership have

decided to turn one of the most pressing issues facing our Nation into

a political stunt.

This resolution is not offered in good faith; it is a blatant effort

to confront, to embarrass, and to chide anyone who has legitimate

questions about how this war is being prosecuted. It is cynical and

mean-spirited, and most tragically, it is a disservice to our troops

who are serving valiantly and sacrificing their lives every day to

accomplish the mission they were given.

Our Nation's future role in Iraq is a serious matter that affects the

lives of all Americans. Consequently, the American public have

legitimate questions--not necessarily about the value of our mission

there, but about how we expect to achieve our goals. They want to know

what victory will look like, the steps we will take to get there, and

the appropriate time for our forces to leave safely. Our soldiers,

sailors, airmen and marines, their families here at home, and all

Americans deserve those answers.

Yesterday, my friend and colleague, Jack Murtha, a patriot and a

decorated veteran, attempted to start that dialogue. However, instead

of having a frank discussion about the potential consequences of

immediate troop withdrawal or addressing the burning questions in the

minds of most Americans, the Republican leadership disingenuously

twisted Mr. Murtha's words, making a mockery of the democratic

principles that we hope to instill throughout the world.

Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution grants Congress the right to

oversee the operations of the military. As a member of the House Armed

Services Committee, it is a responsibility I take very seriously.

Instead of seeking a plan for victory, the Republican leadership has

given the American people silence and the status quo. If we do not

endeavor to provide the answers that so many demand, we will have

failed in our responsibilities.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this resolution and to

demonstrate that we will not play politics on an issue of such

magnitude.