Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the sham piece

of legislation before us. It is not designed to express the will of the

House on Iraq. It is a political stunt intended to avoid a deeply

serious, much-needed debate on the most pressing issue facing our

country today.

Yesterday, the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Murtha, introduced a

resolution calling for the redeployment of American forces from Iraq.

The resolution would require us to maintain a sizeable quick reaction

force in the region, and to reinvigorate our diplomatic efforts to

bring about peace and security for the Iraqi people by truly

internationalizing our efforts there.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Murtha, has correctly observed

that at present, our policy in Iraq ``is a flawed policy wrapped in

illusion,'' and that we cannot continue on this present course, because

to do so is to court disaster. Based on visits to Iraq, discussion with

military leaders there and in Washington, he said that the continued

presence of our troops does not advance our security nor that of Iraq.

He also said that the American people are way out in front of the

Congress on this issue. In all of these things, he spoke the truth.

But in the eyes of the majority and the Bush White House, the

gentleman's resolution is, in the words of White House spokesman Scott

McClellan ``a surrender to the terrorists.'' They have accused him--as

they have others who dare to question their failed policy in Iraq--of

being unpatriotic. Sadly, this is a tactic we have seen before. But it

is deeply corrosive and it must stop. Every American has the right to

question their leaders, period.

There is a reason the majority and the President don't want to be

questioned about Iraq. There are several reasons, in fact. This war was

started based on faulty and misrepresented intelligence. It has been

prosecuted without the number of troops or the amount of equipment that

was known to be necessary before it started. And today, it continues

without broad international cooperation or an exit strategy. Answering

questions about any and all of these is admittedly difficult. But

hiding from the answers is not only cowardly, it is irresponsible. I

too have visited our troops in Iraq, and they are best served if we

face the truth--with the humility that come from recognizing their

valor, dedication, and sacrifice.

As the gentleman from Pennsylvania has said, things are not going as

advertised in Iraq, and the American people know it. Three years of

mistakes and even falsehoods--about the threat Saddam posed, about the

ease of total victory, about how Iraqi oil would pay for

reconstruction, about the cost to America's military and budget, among

others--have finally caught up with this Administration and the

Congressional leadership. The gentleman from Pennsylvania offers a plan

for getting us out of Iraq strategically, methodically, and

successfully. It outlines a way forward for our country to deal with

the number one moral and political issue confronting our nation today.

We should be debating his proposal, not mocking it.

Meeting the challenge that faces us in Iraq requires courage and

honesty. The actions of the majority show neither today. I am sorely

disappointed that they have chosen to act so irresponsibly.