Mr. Speaker, I support the rule and oppose the

underlying resolution.

Calling for an immediate withdrawal, or even a detailed planned

phased withdrawal, from Iraq is a recipe for disaster, a dangerous

defense policy, the wrong message for our soldiers and Marines who are

truly doing the `work of freedom.'

Frankly, I am concerned that such talk will only embolden the

terrorists and demoralize our warfighters--those who put their lives on

the line, literally every day.

Domestic politics should not trump our promises to the people of Iraq

and Afghanistan that we would be loyal to their aspirations for

freedom--that we would see them through

the difficult steps of constituting a new government, laying the

groundwork for free elections.

Our only `exit strategy' from Iraq should be victory. Anything less

than that virtually guarantees the next battleground may be closer to

home!''

Mr. Speaker, we have to choose where we want to fight the global war

on terrorism--in Iraq and Afghanistan or on Main Street in America.

And we must never forget that it is our brave young warfighters--men

and women of the Army, Marines, Navy and Air Force--who are taking the

fight to the terrorists overseas!

They are all volunteers--doing the unheralded work of rebuilding

shattered nations.

If not for their service, Saddam Hussein would still be in power with

all his trappings--the secret police, the torture chambers, the mass

graveyards. God bless these young people.

If not for their service, Iraq would be a nation engulfed in civil

war or in the hands of fanatical terrorists.

The targets of these terrorists are more often than not other

Muslims--worshippers at Friday prayers inside their mosque slaughtered

by suicide bombers--today--and moderate Muslims who reject their

extremist views and work to provide for their families, run businesses

or serve in the government. Indeed, the terrorists' victims include

thousands of Muslims in Iraq--many killed simply because they've chosen

to be free.

Mr. Speaker, with our support, the Iraqis have made great progress.

They established an interim government. They elected members of a

constitutional conference. They've drafted a constitution and conducted

a referendum to endorse that constitution. And in 3 weeks, they will

hold a full-fledged parliamentary election.

None of this would have been possible without the contribution of our

young warfighters.

Of course, at times like these, we are reminded that freedom is not

free. America has paid a heavy price.

Many of us visit soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the

Bethesda Naval Medical Center on a regular basis. Many of us have

attended painful funerals and comforted grieving families. Time and

again, those families of wounded soldiers speak proudly of their loved

ones' service in Iraq--their humanitarian efforts to protect the

innocent, rebuild schools and hospitals, repair the infrastructure of a

civil society.

Let's support our troops--and their families. And let's applaud their

service and heroism.

I urge adoption of this rule and the underlying resolution.