Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution

and in the strongest possible opposition to the Republican smear

campaign against my friend and colleague, Congressman Jack Murtha.

Jack Murtha is a patriot. He has served this country in wartime and

peacetime and has earned an unparalleled record as a champion for our

troops and their families.

Jack Murtha is a retired Marine Colonel with more than thirty years

of distinguished military service. He earned two Purple Hearts and a

Bronze Star for action under enemy fire in Vietnam. He served as a USMC

drill instructor at Parris Island, South Carolina boot camp. And as a

foremost Congressional expert on defense matters, he has spent more

than three decades helping to build a military force that is second to

none in the entire world. I have been proud to serve in Congress with

Jack Murtha for nearly ten years, and I had the honor of hosting him in

my Congressional District and of joining him in visiting wounded

veterans of the Iraq war at Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital.

Yet despite his standing and stature, Congressman Murtha has been

viciously attacked by the Republican partisans for having the temerity

to raise important questions about this Administration's policies

regarding Iraq. Yesterday, the Republican Speaker Dennis Hastert, who

never served in the military, called Jack Murtha a coward. Other

Republicans in Congress and the White House have called Jack Murtha a

traitor and accused him of giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican attack machine has gone too far.

Regardless of one's view of the Administration's Iraq policies, Members

of this Congress deserve to offer their viewpoints without having their

patriotism questioned. Indeed, the American people deserve the benefit

of vigorous debate about a war that has cost us more than 2,000

soldiers killed, thousands more maimed and several hundred billion

dollars of public treasure expended.

The Hunter Resolution is a cheap political trick. It is not a serious

attempt at crafting public policy since Mr. Hunter has said he intends

to vote against his own resolution. Rather than engage in this petty

and deceitful charade, the American people deserve a Congress that

conducts the people's business in a professional manner to address the

challenges facing our country here at home and around the world.

I will vote against the Hunter Resolution.