Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to

express my deep dismay over the resolution being brought before the

House tonight. The leadership of this House has responded to criticism

of the war in Iraq by forcing a meaningless vote in order to shame the

man who offered that critique, my good friend Jack Murtha.

Jack is a patriotic American of the highest order, contrary to the

way our colleagues on the other side of the aisle may try to portray

him. He has dedicated his life to the service of his Nation, defending

it for 37 years as a marine and striving to make it a better place

through his 31 years as a Member of this institution. During that time,

he has earned two purple hearts, a bronze star, and the Vietnamese

Cross of Gallantry and become one of the most respected leaders on

military and Veterans issues from either party.

Rather than listening to the wise words of a man who knows better

than almost any of us what our soldiers need in a time of war, many of

my colleagues have taken to questioning his motives and even his

character, and now House leadership has twisted his words and offered

this resolution as a vehicle to humiliate this proud, honorable, and

decent man. They are holding this House hostage and answering his

principled and heart-felt proposal with a mean-spirited and empty

resolution that is only one sentence, was not considered or debated,

and was offered under the most egregious terms.

I will not be participating in this charade tonight; if I were, I

certainly would vote against this resolution. It is not meant to spark

a legitimate debate over the Iraq war. It is a personal attack rather

than a policy statement. I find it reprehensible to subject this great

and humble man to such indignity.

While I do not necessarily agree that immediate withdrawal from Iraq

is the best course, I respect the conclusion reached by Mr. Murtha

through his soul-searching. Despite any disagreements any of us may

have on policy, we should not come together tonight to single him out

as the object of ridicule. I will not be a part of it, and I would hope

that my colleagues would not either. I urge them to vote ``no'' on this

shameful resolution.