Mr. Speaker, yesterday my colleague from Pennsylvania, a

man whom I deeply respect and admire for his lifetime of service and

sacrifice to the Nation, made a serious statement about the prosecution

of the war effort by the President. His speech yesterday morning and

the resolution that he introduced were heartfelt expressions that he no

longer believes that we can stay the course in Iraq. Mr. Murtha

believes that the continued presence of American troops in Iraq has

retarded Iraqi efforts to unify the country and that Iraqis will not

take the necessary steps to restore security as long as American troops

remain in the country in large numbers.

But instead of addressing the serious deficiencies in the

Administration's military strategy, the majority offers this

counterfeit resolution that precludes any debate on how we can improve

our chance of success in the war effort.

Although there are differences within our caucus as to what our

course of action in Iraq should be, we are united in our belief that

the present course being followed by the administration is not working,

and we must find a new course.

But how have the Vice-President and the Republican Majority in this

House treated the sincere misgivings of a man who has shed blood for

his country and been a staunch supporter of our men and women in the

military? They have launched a vicious smear attack on Mr. Murtha's

patriotism. Indeed they have gone so far as assert that anyone who

questions the wisdom of any aspect of their handling of the war is

unpatriotic, and willing to give aid and comfort to the enemy.

Unfortunately, the administration's inability to communicate a clear

strategy for success in Iraq has caused a great many Americans to

question the Nation's prosecution of the war--including some of the

most devoted, most patriotic and most courageous of Americans. People

like former Senator Max Cleland, and now Jack Murtha.

But I believe that Senator Chuck Hagel has it right--the willingness

to question, to prod and to probe our government is what produces the

best policy and leads to the best

outcomes, in war as well as in peace. The courage to question a

powerful but imperfect government is much more the essence of

patriotism than a coerced silence.

The administration's prosecution of the war effort has suffered from

deficient planning that took the maxim of preparing for the worst and

hoping for the best and turned it on its head. It failed to consider

how the Sunni minority would react to being stripped of its privileged

status, even as they underestimated the consequences of decades of

totalitarian rule and the atomization of Iraqi society under Saddam

Hussein.

Many of my colleagues and I have repeatedly called upon the President

to do what should have been done a long time ago by laying out a

strategy and vision for success in Iraq that will not condemn the Iraqi

people to anarchy or turn Iraq into a haven for jihadis. We have called

for proper oversight of the war effort by Congress to make certain that

our troops in Iraq are properly equipped and that we are doing

everything in our power to ensure their safety and success.

This House, this Congress and this Nation stand for the proposition

that reasoned debate can produce wise policies that will best ``provide

for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the

blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.'' Mr. Speaker,

this resolution should be withdrawn.