Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, as my colleague from across the aisle says, there are many of

us, citizens and Members of this House, who do not believe our

Commander in Chief, and we have good reason not to believe him. I wish

it were not so.

After President Bush announced his escalation of the war, I said that

he owed the American people an honest explanation as to why he thinks

this surge will succeed when previous efforts have failed.

Unfortunately, the President decided to stay the course and to begin

the escalation before either House of Congress had a chance to consider

it. Instead of providing a new comprehensive strategy to turn the tide

in Iraq, President Bush offered the same tired rhetoric. Rather than

engage in an important discussion with the American people, his

loyalists prevented the Senate from debating this crucial matter.

Fortunately for us, such obstruction will not occur in this Chamber

and the House will begin to take up this important debate this week. As

a new Member of the House, I feel it is my responsibility to ask

serious questions of our President who refuses to take this institution

seriously. I ask my colleagues to join with me, to not try to score

cheap political points but to push this administration and its

supporters in Congress for real change in the direction of our Iraq

policy. Our men and women in uniform, who have done everything that has

been asked of them, deserve no less.

So I ask the President why this Congress should support his proposal

to send 20,000 more troops into harm's way when his own former Iraq

commander, General Abizaid, said it is not needed? Why should we

support it when the Prime Minister of Iraq has himself expressed no

support? And why should we support it when the American people have

shown that they actively oppose the President's policy towards Iraq?

From the very outset, this administration has been wrong at every

step of this war.

The administration led us into an unnecessary war with flawed or

manipulated intelligence. Wrong.

This administration went to war without enough troops to win the

peace. Wrong.

This administration gave no-bid contracts to its friends and

political allies, locking out other countries who might have helped us

and indeed locking out the Iraqis. Wrong.

President Bush stood on the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1,

2003 and said,

Wrong.

This administration literally took piles of cash, flying pallets of

millions of dollars from the U.S. mint to Baghdad, into a war zone, and

lost billions of dollars of taxpayer money. Wrong.

Now this administration wants us to blindly place our faith and the

lives of 20,000 more of our troops in an Iraqi government that has

failed to meet every security obligation it has pledged. Sadly, once

again, this President is wrong. And no amount of presidential wrongs is

going to make the situation in Iraq right.

Last fall's National Intelligence Estimate concluded that the

President's policy in Iraq is creating more terrorists than it is

eliminating. Nothing in this policy will change that. Three thousand

one hundred twenty-four American service men's and women's lives have

been lost in Iraq as of yesterday. Three thousand one hundred twenty-

five will not make it right.

It is time for a new strategy in Iraq. It is time to start to bring

our brave men and women who have fought so courageously back home. By

turning Iraq over to the Iraqis, we will force their government to

fight for their own security. Al Qaeda in Iraq will lose their mission

and be less likely to inflame the Sunni-Shiite conflict. And Iran and

Syria will have to work for calm rather than sit in the shadows and

stir the insurgency.

Mr. President, it is time for a new path for the United States and

Iraq. This nonbinding resolution reflects the will of the American

people. It is an important first step but only a first step. I look

forward to working with my colleagues as we seek to untangle this

disaster the administration has brought upon us all. Together, we can

begin to repeal this tragic blunder and undo the damage done to our

military, to our country, and to our standing in the world.