Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is interesting listening to the Republican fog machine starting to

churn out its smoke surrounding the resolution that we are going to be

discussing this week. I listened to my friends from Texas and from

Georgia talking about the innocent people that are going to suffer

under the approaches that we are talking about. Well, it is interesting

that polls show that the people in Iraq, the majority of them, think

it's all right for the insurgents to shoot and kill our soldiers. They

are not just fighting us. They are also fighting each other. The

discussion this week is going to be the first honest and direct

opportunity to start redirecting the course here.

Stay the course? My Lord, that is not remotely what we are talking

about here. Anybody who has watched what the Democrats have done for

the first month that they have been in power realize that we are

setting in motion a foundation to do what should have been done from

the outset: to regain the power of the purse, to be able to deal with

oversight which has been completely abandoned by my Republican friends

over the last 5 years, and start developing the policy framework that

is going to be necessary to deal with the disaster that has been

created in Iraq. The increase in troops, the over 20,000 that we will

be talking about this week, was not the first choice of the military

and indeed the masterminds that President Bush turned to for this surge

theory did not talk about 20,000 or 25,000. They wanted far more

troops. They have stripped this down.

I heard my friend from Texas disparage the retired generals and

admirals who have come forward to deal with their deep concern about

the flawed strategy and implementation of the Iraq campaign. These are

men and women who have proven their dedication to this country, who in

many cases have been in far more battles than all the people in

Congress combined, who don't have anything to win or lose by not

speaking their mind. If you go back and check the record with what they

have said, with what has happened in Iraq, I'll take those retired

commanders every time. The fact is they've been right, and if the

President and Congress had listened to them, we wouldn't be in the

middle of the mess that we're in now.

I served in this body when President Clinton took steps to stop the

genocide in the Balkans, and I watched the Republicans on the other

side of the aisle be unable to figure out whether they supported the

President, they were opposed to the President, or they wanted to change

the policy. Go back and look at the former majority leader, Tom DeLay,

who just couldn't figure out what to do in the Balkans but he sure knew

that he wasn't going to support the Commander in Chief.

What the Democrats are doing now is laying a foundation that should

have been done from the outset. We have had over 50 oversight hearings

now, in the first month, more meaningful oversight than in the last 5

years of the Republicans who just couldn't bring people in to find out

what happened to the billions of dollars in cash that is now

unaccounted for. In committee after committee, the American people are

finally getting to what should have happened years ago in terms of

meaningful oversight. This is what the Truman Commission did during

World War II. The Republicans would have no part of it, and now the

American people are seeing for themselves. We will soon see in the

appropriations process that Congress is regaining the power of the

purse to make sure that the money will be spent properly.

There is no reason to not have troops that are deployed with a

guarantee that they will have the equipment that they need. It was a

travesty what men and women from my State were subjected to, being sent

over to Iraq in a war of choice without being properly equipped. Under

the Democratic watch, we are going to make sure that that is not going

to happen.

Last but not least, by having a simple debate on whether or not this

Congress approves of this escalation, we

are going to establish a baseline. I suggest that this baseline is not

only going to have overwhelming Democratic support, but we are going to

find dozens of Republicans on the other side of the aisle who, when

finally given a choice, are going to make a clear stand with us. It's

just the beginning, it's long overdue, and it's exactly what the

American people, what our troops and the Iraqi people deserve.