Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you like I am a freshman in this body and today we will

begin the debate on one of the most important topics that this Congress

has debated and that is America's involvement in the Middle East and

Iraq and eventually in Afghanistan in dealing with the whole terrorist

situation.

I have been in this House, Mr. Speaker, and listened to the

Republicans and listened to the Democrats and the Democrats, of which I

am a member, have talked about protecting the troops and opposing the

President's surge, which is really an escalation, and the Republicans

have come in here today and said that we need to in essence stay the

course, we need to put in more troops and we're doing wrong by opposing

the President's escalation or surge.

Mr. Speaker, from what I have heard from the American people, the

American people realize this war has been a failure, that American men

and women are dying, and dying for what purpose? For the purpose

theoretically of trying to bring democracy to Iraq where the people in

Iraq don't even want us to be there, where the Iraqi government is

almost nonexistent, where calling what is going on in Iraq a civil war

is almost a misnomer, for a civil war connotes a nation and there

really is not a nation in Iraq. The ministries are not working. The

government is not working. Many of the people in Iraq of the highest

caliber have left Iraq and gotten out of what is a zone where there

have been tens of thousands of Iraqis die. What the people across the

aisle talk about in bringing democracy to these people, in bringing

democracy to these people we have killed tens of thousands of Iraqis,

we have destroyed their nation, and we have put casualties among tens

of thousands of Iraqis. What a price to pay to bring democracy to a

country, to destroy the country.

Mr. Skelton, who will bring forth the Democratic response, has said

that this, quote-unquote, surge is 100,000 troops too few and 3 years

too late. I don't have anybody in this House I respect more on this

position than the head of the Armed Forces Committee, Mr. Skelton from

Missouri.

The fact is this war was started under false pretenses and much of

that information has come out lately. Many of the people who voted to

give the President the power to go into Iraq did so under facts, or

appearance of facts that were given the American people and this

Congress that were false. I remember being at home and watching on

television when the President addressed this Congress and talked about

Osama bin Laden and talked about what he said were connections between

Iraq and 9/11 and it made everybody feel like if you were a red-blooded

American, you wanted to do something about Iraq because they had

destroyed the Twin Towers, they had killed 2,000 people, Americans and

others, and put a devastation in this world that we hadn't seen except

in movies.

Well, that information given us was false. There wasn't a connection

between Iraq and 9/11. We went to war for reasons that are still not

quite clear and known, and this United States of America went to war

against a country that was not at war with us and we were an aggressor

nation. This is something we shouldn't have done. It is not about cut

and run, as the people on the Republican side say, but it is, as

President Clinton says often, it is about stop and think. And when you

stop and think, do you support the troops by continuing to send them in

harm's way?

Mr. Speaker, I am a prizefight fan and one of my favorite fighters

was Floyd Patterson. At one time Floyd Patterson fought Muhammad Ali

and Muhammad Ali was just whooping him and whooping him and whooping

him. And his trainers kept putting him back in the ring and Floyd kept

going in there and trying to fight. But Floyd Patterson didn't belong

in the ring with Muhammad Ali. He could beat a lot of fighters, but he

couldn't beat Muhammad Ali. He was in the wrong fight at the wrong time

and he just got beat and beat and beat. And what a good trainer would

do is throw in the towel, and say, We quit. It's a technical knockout.

We'll fight another day. We'll figure out a new way to fight Muhammad

Ali maybe or maybe that's just somebody we can't fight. It just wasn't

our fight.

To support our troops isn't to continue to send more troops into Iraq

and have more American men and women die and more American men and

women come back as casualties and be in veterans hospitals but is to

get them out of a war they can't win and out of a situation where all

they are is fodder for a civil war, where Iraqis are killing Iraqis and

Iraqis are killing Americans and whether the Americans are there or

not, the Iraqis are going to have their civil war and there is going to

be bloodshed. The only issue left, Mr. Speaker, is how much American

blood will be spilled on this foreign soil on a foreign policy folly

that is somewhat

akin to Napoleon's entries into Russia, to Hitler's entries into Russia

and in the Danish countries' efforts to go into Russia. There are

certain places you can't go and you can't win, and after 4\1/2\ years

this country should know it. To put more troops there, to waste more

blood, and to give up more lives is simply wrong. To support our troops

is to bring them home.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this time. I hope that not more American

men and women will lose their blood or lose their limbs in what is an

impossible war. We need to bring America home, bring our resources

home, and bring our troops home.