Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Los Angeles.

Mr. Speaker, we are here today as a result of the meeting in the

Rules Committee last night where members of the Republican minority

tried to speak about our desire to have more added to this ``simple

resolution,'' as it is being called by the minority. And that it is, a

simple resolution.

Mr. Speaker, we implored upon the committee to make in order more

amendments which would specifically speak directly to the needs of

trying to provide direction and to work with the President of the

United States on where we are in Iraq. In fact, on March 15, 2006,

Members of both parties from this body supported the creation of a

bipartisan Iraq Study Group to review the situation on the ground and

to propose strategies on a way to move forward.

For more than 8 months, the study group met with military officials,

regional experts, academics, journalists and other high-level

officials. This study group included James Baker and Lee Hamilton as

cochairmen. It included Lawrence Eagleburger, Vernon Jordan, Ed Meese,

Sandra Day O'Connor, Leon Panetta, William J. Perry, Charles S. Robb

and Alan Simpson.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the things which were embodied within

this Iraq Study Group report, which came out this last December, embody

the kinds of things that the President of the United States is

attempting to do now in Iraq. The President stood before each and every

one of us as we sat in this Chamber just a few weeks ago and he

outlined very clearly the changes that are taking place and his

willingness not only to work with this body, but willingness to be more

specific.

I would like to read some of the things from the Iraq Study Group

report that we will not be hearing as the voice of the United States

Congress. That is, that the United States should work to ``provide

political reassurance to the Iraqi Government in order to avoid its

collapse and the disintegration of the country.''

America should ``fight al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations in

Iraq using more special operations teams.''

We should ``train, equip and support the Iraqi security forces.''

And we should ``deter even more destructive interference in Iraq by

Syria and Iran.''

But there is more. The ``more'' is ``We could, however, support a

short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize

Baghdad, or to speed up training to equip the mission.''

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is what this resolution, that is

nonbinding, is all about is to politically neuter the President of the

United States, and, I believe, our forces and our mission in Iraq. It

is about trying to do something that is politics, rather than policy.

The Rules Committee last night heard from several of our colleagues,

one of them Sam Johnson, who brought forth an amendment that would

clarify that Congress and the American people support our troops and

the funding for our Armed Forces that are serving in harm's way to make

sure that we do not put that element at risk.

Our colleague from Virginia, Frank Wolf, brought forth the things

that I just spoke about. He brought to the Rules Committee the

recommendations from the Iraq Study Group, with this emphasis on

providing American commanders in Iraq with the strategic and tactical

means to support this war. However, my colleagues on the Democratic

side have decided that what they

want to do is they want to have this be all about politics and not

about policy. They are after a simple answer.

Last night, the Rules Committee met--and after hours of testimony

from members from both parties, the Democrat members of the Committee

voted along party lines to shut out every opportunity for amendment to

the Resolution that the House will be considering over the next 3 days.

Our colleague from Texas, Sam Johnson, brought an amendment that

would have clarified that Congress and the American people support our

troops and that funding for our armed forces serving bravely in harm's

way will not be cut off or restricted in any way.

Our colleague from Virginia, Frank Wolf, also brought to the Rules

Committee a very comprehensive amendment that would have made clear

that Congress supports the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group--

with its emphasis on providing American commanders serving in Iraq with

the strategic and tactical means that they need for success and

accelerated cooperation with Iraqi leaders to meet specific goals--as

the strategy for moving forward to success in Iraq.

A number of other members also spent a large part of their evening

sitting in the Rules Committee, waiting to share their ideas about how

to improve this resolution--however, unfortunately the 13 members of

the Rules Committee are the only ones who will have the benefit of

hearing and debating these good ideas, because none of them were given

the opportunity to be considered and voted on by the House.

Instead, today we are on the floor with a completely closed process

to debate a non-binding resolution with no teeth and a serious logical

flaw.

In 2 short paragraphs, without explicitly stating that funds will not

be cut off from our troops serving in harm's way, the resolution

asserts that Congress and the American people will continue to support

and protect the members of Armed Forces who are serving in Iraq. This

non-specific language is something that every member of this House

clearly supports.

It also states that Congress disapproves of the President's plan to

deploy 20,000 reinforcements to Iraq to bolster the mission and provide

additional support to troops already serving on the ground.

This resolution gives no direction about how we should proceed in

Iraq--instead, it settles for some generic language about supporting

the troops without guaranteeing that Congress will continue to fund

their efforts as they remain in harm's way--and it simply amounts to a

vote for the status quo.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious debate for serious people. We all

understand that the cost of failure in Iraq is too great to bear--it

would embolden radical Islamic terrorists and give them a base from

which to train and attack America for generations.

But with this resolution my colleagues on the other side of the aisle

provide the troops with nothing: no guarantees that we will continue to

fund their heroic efforts; no guarantees that Congress will heed the

advice of the Iraq Study group--which notes on page 73 of their report

that it would ``support a short-term redeployment or surge of American

combat forces to stabilize Baghdad, or to speed up the training and

equipping mission.''

Nor does it provide the American people with a clear picture of our

direction in Iraq--it merely says ``no'' to the only strategy for

success which has been put forward.

Mr. Speaker, I think that Congress can do better than this nonbinding

vote for the status quo in Iraq. I know that a number of my Republican

colleagues tried to improve this legislation, but were denied the

opportunity by the Democrat majority.

But I know that our troops serving in harm's way, and the American

people deserve better than this simplistic resolution that provides no

new ideas, outlines no strategy for victory, and makes no guarantee

that we will continue to fund the efforts of our troops.

I am greatly disappointed in this resolution and the Democrat

majority's efforts to prevent this body from considering amendments

from thoughtful members to improve it.