Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this rule and

the underlying resolution. This rule lays out a bad process, and the

underlying legislation lays out bad policy.

This rule silences any meaningful debate on the floor by denying both

Republicans and Democrats the right to offer any amendments or any

substitute whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic leadership has attempted to mask this

denial of real debate by providing us with 36 hours of floor time. But

this nearly unprecedented amount of time is really little more than a

joke; 36 hours of debate, without any opportunity whatsoever to voice

dissent with a substitute, amounts to nothing more than 36 hours of

talk. The American people want and deserve a real and meaningful

debate, not empty gestures that show utter disregard for an honest and

open discussion on this issue.

Why can't we have a discussion that explores real options and real

solutions?

The reason is very clear, Mr. Speaker. Our Democratic colleagues have

none.

It was bad enough when we addressed issues like stem cell research

and minimum wage without any transparency or openness whatsoever. We

have dealt with several important issues in a complete vacuum. But now,

our Democratic colleagues are running roughshod over our national

security, what is clearly the number one priority that we as a Federal

Government, as federally elected officials, address.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that the war on terror and policy in Iraq is

very clearly the single most important issue that will be addressed by

the 110th Congress. It clearly ranked very high on the list of issues

voters cared about most in last November's election. The American

people are concerned about this war, and they want to know that their

elected officials are developing a sound and effective policy.

So what have the Democrats offered us? What is the substance of their

proposal in a nonbinding resolution that denies the troops the numbers

that they need to succeed? In other words, their proposal is, in fact,

meaningless as legislation, and it is disastrous as a policy.

Mr. Speaker, it is an admission of defeat. And it is a vote of no

confidence in our troops. Like it or not, it is a vote of no confidence

in our troops. Why? Because it does not provide our troops what they

need to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, we are all opposed to the status quo in Iraq. And the

President stood right here when he delivered his State of the Union

message and made it very clear. He wants this war to be over, and he

wants it to be won.

We all know about the tremendous challenges that our men and women

are facing over in Iraq. We all know that. We hear it regularly from

our constituents, the families, and we hear it directly from the men

and women who are serving. We all feel very deeply about the enormity

of the sacrifice that so many have made in service to their country.

And we know that they look to their Commander in Chief for a strategy

for victory.

The President has put forth his strategy, Mr. Speaker. With the

advice and close consultation of our generals in the field, he has

called for a surge in troop levels in order to give our Armed Forces

the support that they need.

Why, again is he doing this? So that he can give our men and women in

uniform, our troops, the support that they need so that they can

succeed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is our role as a Congress to thoroughly vet the

President's proposal to ensure that we develop an effective policy for

moving forward. With this resolution, the Democrats have ignored our

constitutional role. They have not held a single hearing on this

resolution. They have called not one expert witness to testify for the

record on the merits of this resolution. All that they offer is a knee-

jerk reaction against anything that the President says. Again, anything

that the President says is wrong in the eyes of so many of our

colleagues.

Obviously, we, Mr. Speaker, cannot be a rubber stamp for the

executive branch, the second branch of government. But neither can we

afford, neither can we forfeit our duty as a deliberative body to fully

explore the plan that has been put forward and to craft sound public

policy as it relates to this.

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of any deliberation, the Democrats have

concocted a resolution that simply does, as I say, concede defeat. To

the American people, it admits the Democratic leadership is devoid of

ideas. And to the troops, it admits that they have no faith in their

mission, no faith in the troops' mission whatsoever, because they need

this sound strategy that has been put into effect so that we can, in

fact, attain victory and they can be successful.

What is worse, it tries to shroud their lack of faith in our military

with platitudes about supporting our troops. You can't claim support

for our troops without supporting their mission, Mr. Speaker. Again,

you cannot claim to support our troops without supporting their

mission. It is an outrage that they would deny our men and women in

harm's way the traditional and additional support that they need to

succeed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon I had an opportunity to talk

with one of my constituents, a former marine called Ed Blecksmith. Very

tragically, 2 years ago this past November, his son, J.P. was killed in

one of the most famous battles in the war in Iraq, the battle of

Fallujah. Mr. Blecksmith implored me to support a policy of victory. He

said that his son's death will have been in vain if we do not complete

our mission. He made that very clear to me. Again, we got into this

battle to win, and victory is, in fact, the only option. That is from

the father of a man who was tragically killed in Iraq.

And I know that we are going to hear a wide range of views over the

next 36 hours that have come forward from different families. And, of

course, our hearts go out to them. But I will say that this proud

former marine does not want his son to have died in vain, and he is

insistent that we do all that we can to ensure that we complete this

mission.

Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq, like all wars, has been very long, very

difficult and very painful. It has come at a very high price, and we

all know that it has taken its toll on the American people.

But, Mr. Speaker, we go to war to win. We go to war with a mission,

and we dishonor the lives of those who have made the ultimate

sacrifice, if we, in fact, abandon that mission.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution offers no hope to the troops, and it

offers no hope to the people of this country who want to see the

conflict in Iraq resolved so that our troops can come home to their

families.

Mr. Speaker, they deserve better. We have a duty to offer them

something better. We have a duty to pursue nothing less than victory.

I urge my colleagues to reject this rule, reject this resolution,

and, instead, work together to fulfill our constitutional

responsibility as effective legislators.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the Civil War, that great

philosopher John Stuart Mill wrote: ``War is an ugly thing but it is

not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and

patriotic feeling which think nothing worth a war is worse.''

No one likes this war that we are in. As I said earlier, the

President stood here just weeks ago, and in his State of the Union

message he said, I wish very much that this war were over and that we

had won. That is the goal. The goal is victory.

We need to make sure that our men and women in uniform, many of whom

are paying the ultimate price every single day, as we look at the

tragic loss of life, we need to make sure that they have everything

necessary so that we can, as my constituent Ed Blecksmith, a father of

a man who was killed 2 years ago last November in the battle of

Fallujah, said, so that we can complete our mission.

Mr. Speaker, I believe very fervently that you cannot support our

troops without supporting their mission. This resolution that is before

us unfortunately undermines the ability of our troops to complete their

mission.

We have had some very thoughtful proposals that have come forward. We

just had Mr. Wolf stand here and talk about the opportunity that was

denied him to have a vote on the very important bipartisan work of that

Iraq Study Group. Much of what the Iraq Study Group has done has been

already implemented by this administration, but there is more that

needs to be done. Mr. Wolf was tragically denied an opportunity to even

have a vote on whether or not we should support that bipartisan effort

of the Iraq Study Group.

We also had testimony last night, Mr. Speaker, from a man who just

yesterday marked the 34th anniversary from being freed after 7 years as

a prisoner of war in Vietnam, our colleague from Dallas, Texas, Mr.

Johnson. He was denied a chance to have a substitute that would simply

say that we are not going to cut off funding for our troops.

Now, there are many who have argued, Mr. Speaker, that this

resolution that we are going to consider in the next few days is simply

a first step. It is a first step towards ultimately cutting off

funding, and, Mr. Speaker, I think that would be wrong, and that is why

I am urging defeat of the previous question. When we do that, we will

be making in order, when we defeat the previous question, an

opportunity for us to say that we will not cut off funding for our men

and women in uniform.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge a vote against the previous question; and if

by chance we fail on that, I urge a ``no'' vote on this rule, and I

urge a ``no'' vote on the underlying resolution which does, in fact,

undermine the goal of completing our mission and bringing our men and

women home.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.