Mr. Speaker, let me begin by first thanking my

colleagues, Tom Lantos, Ike Skelton and Walter Jones for working

together in a bipartisan way to create this very simple,

straightforward and clear resolution. Their work will allow this House

to have a full and fair debate and, at the end of this week, have a

clear up-or-down vote on whether or not we support or oppose the

President's plan to escalate this war in Iraq.

I also want to thank all my colleagues on the Rules Committee for a

very thoughtful and productive debate last night.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are way ahead of the politicians in

Washington on this issue. They want this war ended, and they want our

troops to come home. Any Member of this House who has been home

recently knows that the questions are increasing, the concern is

growing, and the patience is running out.

The American people are tired of the bickering and partisan

posturing. They are also tired of people trying to muddy the waters and

confuse the issue. They want their leaders to be less concerned with

saving political face and more concerned with saving lives.

It is my hope that at the end of this debate, the House will send a

strong bipartisan message to the President of the United States that it

is time to change course in Iraq.

I hope that the President will listen and will take the opportunity

to sit down with us, roll up his sleeves and do the hard but necessary

work of bringing this tragic war to an end.

If he does not, if he continues to ignore the will of the Congress

and of the American people, then we will have no choice but to go

beyond nonbinding resolutions.

Mr. Speaker, Members like me, who believe it is time to exercise the

power of the purse, will get that opportunity when we take up the

President's supplemental appropriations request and the fiscal year

2008 defense bills.

The best way to support our troops is to bring them home safely to

their families. The best way to protect them is to begin their

immediate, safe and orderly withdrawal from Iraq.

But this week we are focused, rightly in my opinion, on the narrow

and important question of whether we support the President's desire to

escalate the war.

The irony is that Members of this House will be given more time to

debate this nonbinding resolution than they were given by the previous

majority on the question of authorizing the war itself.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a meaningless exercise, which is what some

of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have said. For the

first time in 4 years, the people's House will be on record opposing

the President's policy in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are watching. They want to know

where each Member stands on the issue of escalating the war in Iraq.

That is the issue before us today. That is the only issue we shall be

debating. It is what the American people want to know, and it is what

the President of the United States needs to hear.