Mr. Speaker, I take the floor

today not as a Democrat or a Republican, but as an Iraq war veteran who

was a captain with the 82nd Airborne Division in Baghdad. Three years

ago I came home, but 19 of my fellow paratroopers did not.

I rise to give a voice to the hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians

and veterans across the globe who are deeply troubled by the

President's plan to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq.

I served in Baghdad from June 2003 to January 2004. I saw firsthand

this administration's failed policies in Iraq.

In this new Congress, there are 49 new faces. I am proud that five of

those 49 new faces are veterans. All five of those veterans are

Democrats.

Today, I stand with my other military veterans, Sergeant Major Tim

Walz and Admiral Joe Sestak. We stand together to tell this

administration that we are against the escalation and to say with one

voice that Congress will no longer be a blank check to the President's

failed policies.

Mr. Speaker, the time for more troops was 4 years ago, but this

President ignored the military experts like General Shinseki and

General Zinni, who in 2003 called for more troops, several hundred

thousand more troops, to secure Iraq.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our President is ignoring military leaders again,

patriots like General Colin Powell, General Abizaid and the bipartisan

Iraq Study Group who were clear: the President's plan to send more of

our best and bravest to die refereeing a civil war in Iraq is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, it is a time for a new direction in Iraq. From my time

serving with the 82nd Airborne Division in Iraq, it became clear that

in order to succeed we must make it clear to the Iraqis that we are not

going to be there forever. Yet 3 years after I left Iraq, Americans are

still running convoys up and down Ambush Alley and securing Iraqi

street corners.

Today I am proud to stand with my fellow veterans and support this

resolution.

Mr. Speaker, we often hear from our colleagues on the other side that

the only way to support the troops is to blindly support the President.

Mr. Speaker, I ask anyone to look at Admiral Joe Sestak, a man who

was responsible for the safety and security of 15,000 sailors and

marines, and tell him that he does not support the troops. I ask them

to look at Sergeant Tim Walz, a man who served his country for 24 years

in the Minnesota National Guard as a noncommissioned officer, the

backbone of our Army, and tell him he does not support our troops.

Mr. Speaker, we are the troops, and we oppose the President's

escalation of troops.