Mr. Speaker, tomorrow night President Bush will go on prime

time television to present to the Nation the results of, quite frankly,

what I call his listening tour on what to do about Iraq.

After 4 years since the war began, the President has suddenly taken

an interest in listening. But he certainly is not hearing the American

people.

Nearly 4 years ago, this unnecessary war in Iraq began, and it has

cost our Nation so much. Over 3,000 brave American men and women have

given their lives. We have spent close to $400 billion on this war, and

the President is poised to ask for another $100 billion in the fiscal

2006 supplemental next month.

And this war has greatly undermined our standing in the world and our

national security.

Each additional day that our troops remain on the ground in Iraq, the

longer the target remains on their backs. Instead of doing something

immediately to remove these targets from our troops, the President is

expected to propose escalating the number of our troops in Iraq by

20,000.

Now, regardless of how you spin this, either as a surge or a bump, it

amounts to an escalation of the war at precisely the time we should be

seeking to bring the Iraq war to an end. It is like the man who finds

himself in a hole and decides that the best way out is to keep digging.

An escalation in troops won't change a thing on the ground. Iraq is

still in a civil war, and we are still occupiers.

As reported yesterday, nearly 23,000 Iraqis died in 2006. This is

just in 1 year. And even worse, over 17,000 of these deaths came in the

second half of the year.

In escalating the number of troops, the President fails to address

exactly how U.S. troops will referee this civil war. Are we to pick

sides and support ethnic cleansing of one group over another? Adding

more U.S. troops to this mess will prove not only ineffective, it is

just plain foolish.

But this tactic is nothing new. The President has added troops in the

past. There have been escalations during the Iraqi elections in 2005

and 2006 to shore up Baghdad security. The violence may have quelled

for a moment but only to return with a vengeance, as we have seen.

Finally, the President's plan is futile. Some of the President's own

advisors and experts have questioned the utility of a troop escalation.

Their reasons range from the Iraqi government's inability to capitalize

on new troops to the sheer folly of adding more troops to an already

incendiary situation.

No such luck. In fact, a senior military official was quoted last

month as saying adding more troops would be like adding kerosene to a

fire.

General Abizaid, the top military commander in Iraq, testified before

the Senate Armed Services Committee in November 2006. He posed the

question of his commanders and generals. He said, If we were to bring

in more American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to

achieve success in Iraq? General Abizaid reported that they all said

no.

Mr. Speaker, the President's own press secretary, Tony Snow, said

yesterday that the President still wants to hear what Members of

Congress have to say. Well, I tell you, we have listened to the

American people. Over 60 percent oppose the idea of increased troop

levels. We have listened to the President's own commanders. Escalating

the number of troops won't change the facts on the ground. I think it

is time for the President to listen.

Mr. President, Mr. President, Mr. President, bring our troops home

and make sure that we have no permanent military bases in Iraq.