Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to

give voice to tens of millions of Americans throughout our country who

are looking for an end to the war in Iraq. I rise on behalf of our

brave soldiers on our battlefield who have done everything our country

has asked of them under terrible circumstances and who have made

terrible sacrifices.

I rise on behalf of their families who have suffered great losses and

who worry day and night for their safety and for the loved ones still

in combat. I rise this evening to call on our President to give the

Nation what it has deserved, a viable plan to safely bring this war to

an end, to redeploy the American forces out of Iraq, and turn the

future of Iraq over to the Iraqi people once and for all.

President Bush is soon expected to call for an escalation to the war

in Iraq, seeking to deploy an additional 20,000 troops into combat. The

President's plan would be just the latest in a series of flawed and

tragic decisions that he has made regarding Iraq.

The President was advised at the outset of the war by one of his top

generals to send a large American force in order to win. President Bush

rejected that idea, and since then he has tried at different times a

surge of American troops in an effort to win the war. Now, each time

that effort has failed.

Now he appears ready to defy the odds and take great risks with the

lives of others in order to try his plan one more time. The President

has failed to make a compelling case for adding more troops into what

is clearly the greatest American foreign policy disaster in half a

century or even longer.

I applaud the efforts of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate

Majority Leader Harry Reid, who have called for a new course in Iraq.

On Friday they wrote: ``Adding more combat troops will only endanger

more Americans and stretch our military to the breaking point for no

strategic gain. Rather than deploy additional forces to Iraq, we

believe the way forward is to begin the phased redeployment of our

forces in the next 4 to 6 months, while shifting the principal mission

of our forces there from combat to training, logistics, force

protection and counter-terror.''

I implore the President to seriously consider these views, and I

implore him to also consider the views of the current and former

military and political leaders of his own administration who have

openly questioned sending additional troops to Iraq. For instance, on

December 17 in 2006, former Secretary of State Colin Powell said, ``I

am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the

purposes of suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil war,

will work.''

On November 15 General Abizaid expressed, ``I've met with every

divisional commander. General Casey, the Corps commander, General

Dempsey--we all talked together. And I said, `In your professional

opinion, if we were to bring more American troops now, does it add

considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq?' And they all

said no.''

The war in Iraq is a mistake from the beginning, and I voted against

authorizing this war. But regardless of one's position then, clearly

there is no sound basis now for increasing America's military presence

in Iraq. The war has claimed the lives of over 3,000 American soldiers

and has wounded more than 20,000, and it has clearly become a civil

war.

It is unconscionable to ask one more American soldier to fight and

die in a civil war in Iraq. The President must engage key nations like

Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and others in an effort to create a

political solution in Iraq. The Nation opposes the ongoing war in

America. There is still time for the President to change course, to

reconsider his call for 20,000 more troops in Iraq, and to begin the

redeployment of our troops and our forces now.

I salute those who continue to serve in Iraq. I salute their families

and pledge to them my unyielding support and respect as we try to

safely bring the war to an end.

Mr. President, listen to the people of the Nation which you govern.

They have spoken, and they have spoken overwhelmingly. They reject the

prolonging of the war in Iraq. They want our soldiers redeployed and

brought home safely, and they want it done now.

Please, Mr. President, listen to the people of this Nation.