Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives has shirked

its constitutional duties when it comes to the issue of Iraq.

The most solemn of duties that this body can undertake is the

declaration of war, reserved to the United States Congress. Now, in the

case of Afghanistan, the known perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, Osama

bin Laden and his collaborators in the Taliban, this Congress did act,

with near unanimity. One person dissented. And we passed a resolution

that was compliant with the War Powers Act and the Constitution of the

United States to authorize an attack on Iraq and others who aided and

abetted in the 9/11 attacks.

Now, if George Bush had had proof or had really thought that Saddam

Hussein and Iraq were involved in 9/11, he would have needed no further

authority. But, clearly, he had no proof, and he couldn't make the

case. But he, nonetheless, wanted to attack Iraq. And Congress,

reaching a new low point here, in my opinion unconstitutionally,

vaguely delegated its solemn duties in the case of the making of war to

the President.

Now, I don't believe that Congress can do that, but we did, and the

President then, some 5 months later, used that very broad grant of

authority to preemptively attack Iraq, ostensibly to remove weapons of

mass destruction and the threat of Saddam Hussein, which later morphed

into connections to 9/11, which later morphed into any number of other

things, and which finally became we went into Iraq to bring freedom and

democracy.

Now, since that time, this Congress, this Republican-led Congress,

has refused to conduct any meaningful oversight of what happened about

the distortion or the misuse of intelligence, about the huge scandals

surrounding the more than $10 billion which has disappeared in the so-

called reconstruction effort or the actual conduct of the war itself,

the unbelievable incompetence of Donald Rumsfeld and his cronies, and

the impact on our troops in the military. Not one meaningful hearing.

No debates here on the floor of the House.

So, finally, the Republican leadership says, well, we are going to

have a meaningful debate. Now, let's see what they mean by meaningful

debate. Tomorrow, the House of Representatives will take up a bunch of

time, that is good, at least we are going to discuss it on the floor,

but it will be to debate a nonbinding resolution; that is, something

which has no force of law and no authority. It is a sense of the United

States Congress.

And if you read that sense of Congress, you will find a nonbinding

resolution which will not be amendable. No Democratic alternative or

substitute will be allowed. What the Republicans wrote in secret will

be voted on here on the floor of the House. That is it, up or down.

This resolution, if you vote for it, is a vote for the status quo. It

is a vote for staying in Iraq indefinitely, perhaps a decade or longer.

It is to continue the current policies with no end in sight.

On March 21, President Bush himself even said that the question of

bringing home U.S. troops from Iraq will be decided by future

Presidents. Future Presidents. Remember, unfortunately, he still will

be President until 2 years from last January. Now, that is a pretty

extraordinary statement for the President to make.

Now, I wish that the Republican leadership really wanted to have a

full and fair debate. They could at least allow us to have and debate

an alternative. I am a member of the Out of Iraq Caucus. I am a

cosponsor of Representative Jack Murtha's legislation, legislation that

would lead to a thoughtful and appropriate redeployment of our troops,

and would also say that we would be ready should they need to

reintervene in a crisis situation in Iraq. But what it would do is get

us out of the business of day-to-day getting between the Shiias, the

Kurds, and the Sunnis.

Now, Bush administration said, well, we never could have predicted

the Shiias, the Sunnis, and the Kurds wouldn't get along. Rummy said

they would welcome us like liberators, with flowers and stuff. He just

ignored the last 1,400 years of history, that is all. He also ignored

the State Department and the intelligence agencies, other than the

little select group he had who said the same thing.

And now, I believe that the Shiias, the Kurds, and the Sunnis, and

many others, will not meaningfully move to share power, get their act

together and develop a national government as long as we are staying

forever, which is what the President and what this resolution says. So

I believe that if we go down the path of adopting this resolution that

there will be Members of Congress debating this issue years and years

from today about what is the U.S. future in Iraq.