Mr. Speaker, the Republican leadership's

resolution turns the Iraqi elections, a historic moment for the Iraqi

people by any account, from a point of pride to a point of

partisanship.

As usual, the minority was prohibited from offering a constructive

substitute. We could have offered a measure that congratulated the

Iraqi people on this successful election. Or we might have put forward

a substitute similar to the one that passed resoundingly in the Senate,

that would have required the President at last to submit a detailed

plan for phasing down the occupation. The leadership refused to let us

do either, opting instead for a measure that divides and distracts.

As a statement of policy, this resolution is deeply flawed. It

rejects a plan for bringing our troops home. It fails to empower the

Iraqis to take charge of their own future. And it blindly adopts the

vague formula the President has repeatedly put forth, ``as they stand

up, we stand down.''

As we have come to know very well from this ``mission accomplished''

President, catchy slogans do not make effective foreign policy.

Standing up Iraqi troops is a critical step in empowering the Iraqi

state, but American national security demands additional priorities:

That we maximize Iraq's chance of a successful transition to self-rule

while minimizing the possibility of civil war; that we stabilize the

region, preventing the terrorists from taking hold; and that we protect

America's men and women in uniform.

It is high time we took up a real measure to deal with the situation

in Iraq such as H. Con. Res. 70, which I have introduced with Mr.

Miller of North Carolina, now co-sponsored by 17 Members. That approach

takes into account the Iraqis' recent steps toward sovereignty with two

successful elections. It recognizes the valor of our troops. It

requires a detailed exit strategy of the President. It calls for an

immediate, initial draw down, and it sends a strong signal that we do

not intend to occupy Iraq indefinitely.

Why will the House Republican leadership not let us vote on such a

measure? Because they fear it would pass, and they fear embarrassing

the President by calling him to account.

Mr. Speaker, let us start giving the American people what they are

looking for: Honesty, accountability and a serious plan going forward;

three things that have been sorely lacking since President Bush

launched this war.