Mr. Speaker, it has been a day of great

importance, and tomorrow, we will conclude this debate on Iraq.

When I spoke earlier today, I mentioned that the dilemma that we have

is that although there has been a debate, one would wonder, with such

an important topic, why the process did not allow the American people

to have alternatives to the present resolution on the floor and why we

were so constrained that there could not be a definitive plan that

speaks to the concern of the American people, the families of soldiers

and veterans, and that is, to discuss fully, without partisan rhetoric,

the idea of redeployment and the opportunity for our soldiers to return

home.

Now, 2 years or so ago, I had, and offered, to this administration a

concept that I believe would not have placed us where we are today. I

rose today to say that I support the Murtha plan and resolution, which

clearly provides an opportunity for redeployment as soon as

practicable. It is not the cut-and-run theory. It is a theory that we

respect the idea of the military fighting for our freedom and respect

the fact that the military's mission has been completed.

Having just come back from Iraq myself, and been there three times

and as well to Afghanistan, I know that the boots on the ground, the

leadership on the ground is, by any means, any definition, the most

excellent military in the world. We thank them. We thank their

families. We thank the enlisted. We thank the Reservists, we thank the

National Guard and any others, civilians who are serving on those front

lines.

But we are the policy-makers, and we owe them not just a debt of

gratitude. So, tomorrow, in protest for no plan, I will be voting

``no'' on the resolution. I do so without any shame or any conceding to

accusations of not being patriotic. My patriotism is exhibited by my

dissent and the dissent of the American people asking us to do

something, to create a plan that tracks the sovereignty of Iraq, gives

them the opportunity to move toward their own freedom, to protect

themselves through the Iraqi National Army and the Iraqi National

Police.

Let me just simply say to the American people that what we are

discussing today are these soldiers who have been willing to put their

lives on the front line. These are husbands and wives and aunts and

uncles and cousins. These are mothers and fathers. These are our

neighbors. These are, in fact, our brothers and sisters. These are

Americans, individuals who have put themselves on the front line. We,

as policy-makers, should not cut and run on them.

I would just say to my colleagues that if we are to be patriotic,

then we should do it by words and not by deeds.

So I would argue that what we have done to the soldier is to talk and

not act. We have, in fact, devastated the United States Army,

therefore, disallowing or at least causing them to be diminished and

taking and causing us to put them in a position where it will take

years for them to rebuild themselves.

We have undermined the military by not equipping the troops. When

asked by a soldier in the field why U.S. troops did not have the right

armor for their vehicles, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said, as

you know, you have to go to war with the Army you have, not the Army

you want. What a callous, senseless thing to say, to throw our Army

into harm's way, and careless about whether they are protected or have

the armor to protect themselves, allowing families and parents to get

their hard-earned pennies to send flak jackets to their children and

then not taking care of our troops when they come home.

The Bush administration has not developed policies to take care of

the thousands, 19,000 casualties who are injured, 2,500 of course who

died, the 2,500 today.

Health care has proven inadequate, and wounded veterans have been

hounded by debt collectors because of inefficiencies in the Pentagon's

administrative expenses.

Mr. Speaker, this is not long enough for the catastrophic and

necessity of the debate or the changes that are needed in order to

change the direction of Iraq.

I, too, applaud the ending of Zarqawi's leadership of terrorism in

the world, but that is not the end of the story, and we know that

insurgency in Iraq is only 10 percent of the violence. The violence is

between Shiite and Sunni and those young people who believe they can

kill Americans with impunity and with immunity.

So I would simply say that I hope tomorrow there will be a

metamorphical change. I hope someone will shine the light on this body.

I hope we will rise with courage to say that there must be a new

direction. I hope we will discard this senseless resolution that simply

wants to make partisan or make a partisan battle about who supports the

troops and who does not.

We cannot stay the course. Richard Nixon knew that we could not stay

The course in Vietnam, and he changed the course of direction.

It is not anti-patriotic to be able to stand up against the wind of

the majority, to be able to say that the dissenting Americans need to

be heard, and if we are heard, it will be for the betterment of this

Nation and the betterment of this world. Then we can begin to fight the

global war on terror. Then we can be more successful. Then we can form

the coalition that we need to weed out the terrorists and to truly

create for our children a better world.

I hope tomorrow we will shed the light on this place and change

direction in the Iraq War.