Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to voice my support for

our mission in Iraq and the global war on terror.

We stand at a critical juncture in the history of Iraq and in our own

history. Do we ignore the steady progress toward democracy in Iraq? Do

we hand victory to the terrorist insurgency on the eve of the historic

December 15 elections? Or do we remain committed to the cause of

freedom at home and abroad?

Our Nation already knows of the price of victory and how great it is,

but the cost of failure would be far greater.

As Democratic National Committee Chair Howard Dean was engaging in

the politics of partisans and the demagoguery of doubters, I was

visiting with our amputees in the Walter Reed Medical Hospital. These

brave men and women know why we are fighting and why we must continue

to fight. They know better than any of us why their brothers in arms

have died fighting. Their sacrifices have been made in the name of

freedom and in the pursuit of victory.

Not only is victory in Iraq possible, but it is within reach. Faced

with long painful recoveries, these soldiers focus on the positive and

what can be done and what will be done. We owe them the same.

It is not the time for retreat. It is the time for our Nation's

civilian leadership to stand with them. Their sacrifice obligates us to

demonstrate the same level of commitment and dedication to this cause

of freedom. And each day as a Nation, we are more indebted to these

extraordinary men and women with whom I visited.