Mr. Speaker, last Thursday and Friday, the House

conducted a very important debate on the global war on terror. The

resolution in question, H. Res. 861, honored the sacrifice of our

soldiers and reaffirmed our commitment to victory in that global war on

terror. I am very heartened that the House Republicans were joined by

nearly a quarter of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, 42,

to be exact, voting in support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, it was a spirited 10-hour debate, and over the course of

it I heard some criticisms that I believe deserve a response. Many in

the minority objected to the resolution and the forum for its

consideration. They contended that the resolution was hollow, and it

did not allow for a meaningful debate on the war.

With such antipathy for the process and the resolution, one would

have expected the Democratic leadership to ask for a vote on the

previous question on the rule so that they could, in fact, amend it. In

fact, they didn't. Or they might have offered a specific official

substitute resolution which I, on several occasions over a 2-day

period, said we would have considered making in order.

But, Mr. Speaker, they did neither. In fact, as I said, for over 2

days, I asked the Democratic leadership for an alternative. I was told

that nothing would be forthcoming. While individual Members such as Mr.

Abercrombie did offer their own alternatives, the minority on the Rules

Committee chose not to submit any of them as the official Democratic

substitute.

Unfortunately, many Members chose to make this a debate about

process, rather than the real issue at hand. After listening to the

debate, I know why. The minority party has no clear position on how to

win the global war on terror and prevail in Iraq. When it comes to the

biggest challenge of our generation, they are not of one mind. Some

agree with House Republicans that it is absolutely essential to stay in

Iraq until we achieve victory. Unfortunately, the majority of Democrats

favor retreat in one form or another, whether it is the vague policy of

redeployment or outright and immediate withdrawal, as the Out of Iraq

Caucus has called it.

This is a dangerous approach, Mr. Speaker. While perhaps intended to

comfort our country in the midst of a truly devastating and trying

struggle, it would serve chiefly to comfort the enemy. We know that two

decades of tepid responses to attacks on our citizens and our interests

in Lebanon, Somalia, New York City, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Kenya and

Yemen only emboldened terrorists. We will not make the same mistake

again.

Mr. Speaker, the Iraqi people, its security forces and its government

are not naive. Nor are we. Despite recent progress such as the killing

of al Zarqawi and the completion of the Iraqi government's cabinet,

calm is not just around the corner. The terrorists are unyielding.

After all, their stated aim is to drive coalition forces out of the

country and establish a territory-hungry, terrorist-friendly extremist

state.

They have openly declared that the United States does not have the

will to see the fight through. They understand the significance of this

battle, and so must we. We must accept nothing but total engagement and

commitment as we help Iraq stabilize herself and become an ally in the

war on terror. We cannot fulfill our mission, honor the sacrifice of

our troops and move forward in the war on terror by backing away from

its central battlefield. In a region where democracy has the potential

to become more than a hope, we cannot abandon its best hope.

Mr. Speaker, if we leave prematurely, and Iraq is allowed to become a

lawless territory, sympathetic to terrorists, and brutal to its own

people, the safety of the world and the security of the United States

of America would be directly threatened.

On September 11, 2001, we saw exactly what could happen when such

conditions were allowed to exist in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that some criticized the forum for our

debate. As one Member described it, the 10 hours would be like a

glorified special order.

But make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, our words matter. For proof, look

no

further than Zarqawi's bombed-out safe house. In the rubble, a copy of

Arabic Newsweek was found. Our enemies, the enemies of peace and

freedom, are listening, they are reading, and they are waiting for

signs of weakness and timidity in the face of their brutality.

With a vote in support of H. Res. 861, we gave them no such thing,

and their kidnapping of our men and women will only strengthen our

resolve. While there are significant differences between the majority

and the minority on how to win the global war on terror, I am proud of

both the process followed for conducting this debate and the

overwhelming bipartisan vote to support our troops and complete the

mission in Iraq.