Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution.

I will be frank to say that I think the time lines are too tight, the

details are too sketchy; but I recognize this resolution for what it

is. It is not a general order or master plan for the redeployment of

our troops in Iraq. This is simply a way to frame the debate with the

President over how we can most effectively reduce and redeploy the

170,000 troops now on duty in Iraq. We are, after all, in the 5th year

of this war.

So far, 3,611 Americans have given their lives, 27,000 have been

wounded in action. We have spent $450 billion through May, and continue

spending now at a rate of $10 billion a month. Had we the foresight 3

years ago, 4 years ago to see these costs, the War Powers Resolution

would not have secured 100 votes in this House.

Opponents of this resolution claim that we are encroaching on the

powers of the President as the Commander in Chief. Those who think that

should read the resolution and read it carefully.

First of all, it does not call for an immediate withdrawal. It allows

4 months for the reduction in forces to begin. Second, it does not call

for withdrawal at all. It calls for a reduction of the

number of troops deployed or transition to a limited mission. Third, it

spells out the limited missions. These include force protection,

diplomatic protection, pursuit of terrorists, training of Iraqi forces.

The resolution, far from interfering, defers to the President, allows

the Pentagon to decide just what is the minimum force level for the

mission it specifies, provided it justifies its decision.

For the past 3 years, the President has assured us that we would

stand down American troops as soon as Iraqi troops stood up. Well, that

is essentially what this resolution does; 135 Iraqi battalions have

been trained. Many may lack things like logistics to make them

freestanding fighting units, but surely this is a capacity we can

supply over the next 6 months or even longer through embedded advisers

who will remain after April 2008.

This resolution sends the Iraqi troops the message that we are not in

their country, Iraq, indefinitely, and that the day is fast approaching

when they must take responsibility for the security of their own

country.

For the past 2 years the President has told us that benchmarks or

milestones have been laid down for the Iraqi government to accomplish.

This week we received a progress report on those metrics showing few

measurable gains.

So here's our dilemma: Our presence in Iraq, with 170,000 troops,

allows the Iraqi government an ability to operate, the freedom of

action it would not otherwise enjoy absent our support. But the Iraqi

government has exploited that security to avoid doing the very steps

that are necessary to its becoming a true government of national

reconciliation, which commands the allegiance of all Iraqis.

Yesterday the Deputy Director for Analysis in the Office of National

Intelligence told us, ``current political trends are moving the country

in a negative direction.'' One way to make Iraqi leaders take the reins

of their own government, establish their government, is to announce

reduction of our forces in front-line combat troops and their

transition to a limited mission and make it clear that our commitment

to their country is not open-ended.

Three or 4 months ago, we were told by the administration it was

going to undertake a new strategy, a new plan for securing Iraq called

a surge, concentrated primarily in Baghdad. We now have the early

results from that. We were told we would know in 3 or 4 months. Three

or 4 months have passed, and we've only seen casualties increase. There

have been some successes, sure, and we're thankful for them. And I hope

it succeeds. But we need a new strategy. We do not have one, and this

calls for a rethinking of everything. And for these reasons I will vote

for this resolution, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.