Mr. Speaker, I rise today with mixed emotions. I am

proud of our troops and the sacrifices they have made in Iraq, their

dedication, their perseverance and the love and support of their

families here at home. I am disappointed that the strategies employed

thus far have not been more successful and that our progress in Iraq

has been too slow, and I am saddened that those who have drafted this

resolution are offering no alternatives of their own for our mission in

Iraq. Indeed, they are prohibiting consideration in this Chamber of any

alternative.

Therefore, I will vote against this resolution.

I believe most Americans share the same goal for Iraq, a stable

government that can serve its people, a strong security force that can

protect its people, and a growing economy that can encourage prosperity

for its people.

We want the Iraqis to succeed, and we want our troops to come home.

There is no question and no denying that mistakes in the planning and

execution of the war have led us to where we are today. Hindsight is

20/20, and we can all offer suggestions for how things should have been

done differently, done better, done more effectively during the past 4

years.

But that is not what is going on in this Chamber here today. Members

are being cynically asked to vote on a resolution that does not address

victory or success. It does not offer a pathway toward the peace and

the prosperity that are vital to the region. It simply plays politics

with the war and, in so doing, does our troops and their families here

at home a terrible disservice.

While no one in this Chamber or any general in uniform can guarantee

the success of this new initiative in Iraq, we can safely say that not

pursuing it and continuing the status quo will lead to failure. Iraq

then likely would fall into further chaos and transform itself, much as

Afghanistan did a decade ago, into a breeding ground for terrorists,

who plot attacks not on our troops in Iraq but upon our civilians here

at home.

Make no mistake, failure of the U.S. mission in Iraq will not end the

war. It will only shift the battlefield. The terrorists are at war with

us, whether we fight back or not.

The consequences of failure in Iraq would be as dramatic as the

fruits of victory. An Iraqi government stable enough to take the lead

role in providing for its own internal security will allow us to

achieve our collective goal, the return of U.S. troops. Rather than

being allied with terrorists, Iraq would be an ally with America and

the war on terror. In so doing, it would honor the more than 3,000

American men and women who have died fighting for its freedom and

countless more who have been wounded and will bear for their lifetimes

the scars of battle.

The status quo in Iraq is unacceptable. We need a new strategy, new

tactics, new commanders on the ground, and a new and sustained

commitment from the Iraqi government that they will do more of their

share.

We know that the road ahead will be difficult and that the prospects

for success are dwindling. But I believe a renewed and amplified effort

by U.S. forces and Iraqi troops to retain security in Baghdad may offer

the best hope we have for the lasting success of the U.S. mission and

for the future stability of Iraq's government. It may also be, I

believe, our last chance for victory. The President knows this, and I

believe the Iraqi government and its people know this, too.

It is in that spirit and with that understanding that I will vote

against this resolution. Our collective prayer is for the safety of our

troops, for their success, and that they will be reunited with their

families here at home as soon as possible.