Mr. Speaker, I love America. America means

something to me. No one loves the Constitution more than I. No one

believes in the Declaration of Independence more than I. No one

respects the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance more than I. No one

appreciates the American soldier more than I.

So I stand here today in the well of the United States House of

Representatives as a proud American who understands that it is not the

Constitution that gives us or protects government of the people, by the

people, for the people. It is not the Declaration of Independence that

preserves the concept of all persons being created equal. It is the

soldier.

It is not the Pledge of Allegiance that preserves liberty and justice

for all. It is the soldier. It is the soldier who shields those who

would make real the great American ideals. Regardless as to how we feel

about the war, we should all thank God for the American soldier.

Mr. Speaker, our soldiers have done their job. More than 84,000

National Guard and Reservists have been deployed more than once since

2001. More than 170,000 soldiers in the Army have served more than one

tour of duty. More than 23,000 soldiers have been wounded, and more

than 2,200 of these from Texas were from Texas alone. More than 3,100

soldiers have died, including more than 200 from Texas.

Our soldiers have liberated Iraq from a ruthless, brutal dictator.

Our soldiers have answered the clarion call for help for which too many

will never come home for the holidays and far too many will never see

home again.

So for this I say, God bless the American soldiers, their friends,

their families, and their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have been that friend, indeed, in

Iraq's time of need. In addition to blood, sweat and tears, the

American people have spent more than $267 million, not per year, not

per month not per week, but more than $267 million per day on this war.

Mr. Speaker, with this money, according to CNN and the National

Priorities Project, we could have hired 6.4 million public school

teachers. We could have built 3.3 million public housing units. We

could have insured 220 million children for 1 year.

On a more lofty level, America has helped the Iraqi people develop a

constitution. We have helped the Iraqi people establish democratic

elections. We have helped the Iraqis reconstitute their military and

overhaul their constabulary.

Mr. Speaker, after all that we have done, more than 23,000 wounded.

After all that we have done, 3,100 are dead. After all that we have

done, more than $267 million per day. After all that we have done,

whenever we leave, it will not be cut and run. We have helped the Iraqi

people to have the opportunity to embrace freedom and democracy.

It is now time for the Iraqi people to seize upon this precious,

priceless opportunity and have a free and independent Iraq, something

that all the money in the world cannot buy and not even the most

powerful military in the universe can impose.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot want liberty and justice for all Iraqis more

than all Iraqis want liberty and justice for themselves.

If the Iraqis want government of the people, by the people, for the

people, then their soldiers, not ours, must provide it. We can stay in

Iraq forever and never have a free and independent Iraq, not as long as

the Iraqi people engage in an uncivil war with each other. You can

debate whether it is a civil war or not, but there is no debating that

it is an uncivil war that they are having with each other.

Mr. Speaker, because I support our soldiers and oppose the

President's policies, I will vote for the resolution.