Mr. Speaker, I rise today in

opposition to this resolution condemning the President's proposal for

achieving success in Iraq and overall victory in the global war on

terror. We are not formulating policy today. We are not offering the

President an alternative. All this resolution is saying is that we do

not support our Commander in Chief, and all it is doing is emboldening

the terrorist enemies we are facing today.

I am the first to welcome an open discussion about our involvement in

Iraq. But, without the opportunity to consider an alternative, this is

not open discussion. Why isn't this an open discussion? Because

although the majority party has the authority to govern, they have no

plan to lead.

For over a year, the majority party criticized the President for not

making changes in his strategy in Iraq. Well, the President has made

changes, and the majority party still is not satisfied.

We can all agree that our progress has not been as swift and decisive

as we once hoped. We all recognize that the war in Iraq has carried on

longer than we wanted and consumed more resources than we expected.

However, we all knew from the beginning that it would not be easy, that

the war against terror would not be a quick fight.

But when the going gets tough, it does not mean that we should give

in and come home. As we cannot and must not turn back, we need a fresh

approach to move forward. The President, along with his generals on the

ground, have proposed a way forward. He has put forth a strategy to

suppress the sectarian violence in Iraq and allow democratic reforms to

take hold and economic institutions to flourish.

His plan is the only plan that provides for a way forward in Iraq.

For us in Congress, it is not our job to become involved in tactical

decisions that will lead to success in our mission. It is our

responsibility to help shape the parameters of the mission and to

conduct oversight on our progress in achieving the mission.

Republicans in Congress have proposed setting verifiable benchmarks

with which we may measure our progress in Iraq. Such benchmarks will

help us hold the Iraqi regime responsible for the progress made towards

democracy, stability and peace in the country. We should be discussing

our responsibility as oversight today, but we are not. We are left with

debate on an empty and nonbinding resolution.

I am a proud cosponsor of Congressman Sam Johnson's bill to ensure

that funding is not cut off or restricted for members of the Armed

Forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. We must support every effort

in our fight against terrorists. If the majority allowed us an

opportunity, I would have gladly supported a vote on that bill to

reaffirm that the House will not abandon our Armed Forces under any

circumstance.

Whether the majority would like to acknowledge it or not, the fight

we are engaged in against terrorists in Iraq is not a new fight. It has

been waged for a decade. We have faced terrorists in Beirut, we have

faced terrorists in Saudi Arabia, and we have faced terrorists here on

our own soil on September 11, 2001.

We have learned it is absolutely essential to confront terrorists

abroad before they attack us at home. Despite what some of you may say,

our withdrawal will not end the terrorist threat. After all, it is they

who have declared Iraq to be the central front in the struggle.

We cannot withdraw. We cannot send our troops and other allies the

message that we will quit when the going gets tough. Instead, we must

move forward with the operations in Iraq, with the Iraqi people, to

ensure that peace and stability take hold. We must change our strategy

as the situation in the field dictates. To do otherwise would be

foolish.

But by maintaining our commitment in Iraq, we preserve the prospects

of peace. By withdrawing, we surrender our chances of permanent

stability in the Middle East.

This resolution in so many words says that we cannot be successful,

and we are bound to fail. I refuse to agree. I refuse to undercut the

brave work of our troops by questioning their abilities and refuse to

allow terrorists to flourish and our enemies be emboldened and thereby

let you, the American people, down.

Our brave men and women risk their lives to provide peace and

security here at home, and we are all proud to know such patriots.

These young men and women, full of promise, voluntarily defend our

Nation wherever they are called.

It reminds me of a young man in my district, and I presented him with

his Eagle Scout awards when he was 17 years old. It was in 2003. A

little less than 2 years later than that, in 2004, I attended the

funeral for Lance Corporal Abraham Simpson, who made the ultimate

sacrifice in Fallujah. He was just 19 years old.

When I went to the parents of Abraham and presented a flag that was

flown over our great Nation after the funeral, it was honestly one of

the most moving experiences I have had, not only in my congressional

career but of my life. When I looked at Abraham's father in his car, I

couldn't talk. All I could say to him was, ``I voted to send him

there.'' Abraham's dad looked me square in the eye, with as serious a

look as he could get, and he said, ``Congressman, it was the right

vote.''

Like so many families across our country, the Simpson family has made

a great sacrifice for our Nation. This resolution, however, says that

the world, that the men and women like Lance Corporal Simpson, gave

their lives for, was worthless, that America cannot be successful in

the pursuit of which they nobly sacrificed themselves. I believe that

we can. I know that if we stand firm in our principles and remain true

to our convictions, we can succeed.

For that reason, I am going to vote ``no'' on this resolution.

I rise today in opposition to this resolution condemning the

President's proposal for achieving success in Iraq and overall victory

in the Global War on Terror.

I know I join many of my colleagues in lamenting the process by which

we are considering this resolution. We are not formulating policy; we

are not offering the President an alternative. All this resolution is

saying is that we do not support our Commander in Chief and all it is

doing is emboldening our terrorist enemies.

While the valiant men and women of our Armed Forces are fighting for

freedom abroad, the majority party has cut off democracy here in the

House of Representatives so that we may consider a partisan resolution.

I am the first to welcome an open discussion about our involvement in

Iraq, but without the opportunity to consider alternatives, this is not

an open discussion. And why is there no open discussion? Because

although the majority party has the authority to govern, they have no

plan to lead.

For over a year, the majority party criticized the President for not

making changes to his strategy in Iraq. Well, the President has made

changes, and the majority party is still not satisfied. Today, the

majority party still opposes the President's strategy, but they have

not offered any alternatives. They continue to criticize--destructively

and not constructively.

We can all agree that our progress has not been as swift or as

decisive as we once hoped. We all recognize that the war in Iraq has

carried on longer than we wanted and consumed more resources than we

first thought.

However, we all knew from the beginning that it would not be easy--

that the war against terror is not something that would be a quick

fight, but that it would take years. As history has taught us, war is

not an easy prospect and sometimes does not go according to plan.

But when the going gets tough, this does not mean that we should give

in and come home. That is not the American way--that is not how America

honors its commitments and carries out its obligations. And it is not

how America pays respect to those who have fallen in its service.

As we cannot--and must not--turn back, we need a fresh approach to

move forward. The President, along with his generals on the ground, has

proposed a way forward. He has put forth a strategy to suppress the

sectarian violence in Iraq to allow democratic reforms to take hold and

economic institutions to flourish.

His plan is the only plan that provides for a way forward in Iraq.

While the majority party proposes to stand still and do nothing, the

President's plan aims to allow American forces to stand down as the

Iraqi people stand up.

For us in Congress, it is not our job to become involved in the

tactical decisions that will lead to success in our mission. It is our

responsibility to help shape the parameters of our mission and to

conduct oversight on our progress in achieving the mission.

Republicans in Congress have proposed setting verifiable benchmarks

with which we may measure our progress in Iraq. These strategic

benchmarks, concerning the transfer of military operations to Iraqi-led

units, the development of democratic institutions and the rule of law

in Iraq, and increased regional cooperation and stabilization, are

important in moving forward in Iraq. Such benchmarks will help us hold

the Iraqi regime responsible for the progress made toward democracy,

stability, and peace in their country.

There is, however, no attempt at oversight in this resolution. Once

again, all the majority party is doing is complaining without providing

an alternative. We should be discussing our responsibility at oversight

today. But we are not. We are left with debate on this empty and

nonbinding resolution.

No matter what, we must support funding for our troops that are

serving in harm's way--with no ifs, ands, or buts. I am a proud

cosponsor of Congressman Sam Johnson's bill to ensure funding is not

cut off or restricted for members of the Armed Forces deployed in Iraq

or Afghanistan. We must support every effort in our fight against

terrorists.

If the majority allowed us the opportunity, I would have gladly

supported a vote on this bill to reaffirm to our troops, our

constituents, and our enemies that the House will not abandon our Armed

Forces--under any circumstances. Unfortunately, Republican voices were

shut out of this process and we are left to consider this empty and

non-binding resolution.

All we heard on this floor for the last year was talk about

bipartisanship and cooperation. The talk was about the need to be more

bipartisan. Boy, we sure do have short memories. Despite the partisan

atmosphere here in the House, the fact is that we have to be successful

in Iraq because the consequences of our withdrawal would be disastrous.

Whether the majority would like to acknowledge it or not, the fight

we are engaged in against terrorists in Iraq is not a new fight--it has

been waged for decades. We have faced terrorists in Beirut. We have

faced terrorists in Saudi Arabia. And we have faced terrorists on our

own soil--on September 11, 2001. We have learned that it is absolutely

essential to confront terrorists abroad before they may attack us at

home.

If we withdraw from Iraq, we give our terrorist enemies--and they are

our enemies--a safe haven from which to plan their attacks against us

and our allies. Despite what some of you may say, our withdrawal will

not end the terrorist threat. After all, it is they who have declared

Iraq to be the central front in this struggle. If we withdraw, it will

only encourage the terrorists. They will not rest until their agenda of

violence and hatred is advanced worldwide. We cannot withdraw. We

cannot send our troops and our allies the message that we will quit

when the going gets tough.

Instead, we must move forward with operations in Iraq--with the Iraqi

people--to ensure that peace and stability take hold. We must change

our strategy as the situation in the field dictates. To do otherwise

would be foolish. But by maintaining our commitment to Iraq, we

preserve the prospects of peace. By withdrawing, we surrender our

chances for permanent stability in the Middle East.

The United States has a long and proud history of championing

liberty. As a Civil War history enthusiast, I am reminded of the

parallels between this generation's fight against terrorism and the

Civil War. Both wars brought new and grave challenges to our people and

our way of life. Both struggles were fraught with opposition in the

press and in Congress. But imagine what would have happened to our

nation if President Lincoln did not continue the fight to preserve our

union.

Just as Lincoln fought against all odds and in the face of grave

danger to ensure freedom for all people and to preserve democracy, our

troops are doing the same today. Just as Lincoln was successful by

standing firm in his commitment to liberty and democracy, I strongly

believe that we can--and will--be successful in Iraq if we are to

ensure our freedom for the future.

This resolution, in so many words, says that we cannot be

successful--that we are bound to fail. I refuse to agree. I refuse to

undercut the bravel work of our troops by questioning their abilities.

I refuse to abandon our Iraqi allies when they need us the most. And I

refuse to allow terrorism to flourish and our enemies to be emboldened

and thereby let you, the American people, down.

Instead, we must go forward. We must continue to support our troops

and their important work in Iraq. We must tell them loudly and clearly

that the American people stand with them as they fight to bring liberty

and security to Iraq.

Most importantly, we must honor our troops and the memory of those

who have made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom by rejecting this

empty resolution. These brave men and women risk their lives to provide

peace and security here at home and we are all proud to know such

patriots.

As members of Congress, we all understand the responsibility we have

when our nation calls our best and brightest to serve in harm's way.

These young men and women, full of promise, voluntarily defend our

nation wherever they are called.

One such brave young man from my district was Marine Lance Corporal

Abraham Simpson from Chino, California. In early 2003, I presented

Abraham with his Eagle Scout award to recognize his achievement of the

Boy Scouts' highest rank. A little less than two years later, in

November 2004, Lance Corporal Simpson made the ultimate sacrifice

during the Battle of Fallujah. He was just 19 years old.

When I presented his parents with a flag flown over the Capitol of

this great Nation, it was one of the most moving moments not only of my

congressional career, but of my life. All I could say to Abraham's

father was, ``I voted to send him there.'' He looked me square in the

eyes and he said, ``Congressman, it was the right vote.''

To honor his cousin's sacrifice, Marine Sergeant Jonathan Simpson,

who had originally joined the Marines as a flight navigator, asked to

be transferred so he could fight on the front lines. Jonathan Simpson

was killed during combat operations in Iraq in October 2006.

Abraham and Jonathan Simpson, true American heroes, gave their lives

in service to this Nation, and for that--and for all of our fallen

heroes--I will always be humbled and grateful. Like so many other

families across our country, the Simpson family has made a great

sacrifice for our Nation, our ideals, and our freedom.

This resolution, however, says to the world that men and women like

Lance Corporal Simpson and Sergeant Simpson gave their lives for

naught--that America cannot be successful in the pursuit for which they

nobly sacrificed. I believe we can. I know if we stand firm in our

principles and remain true to our convictions we can succeed.

For this reason, I wholeheartedly oppose this empty resolution and

strongly urge my colleagues to do the same.