Mr. Speaker, there are two fundamental questions we face

in voting on this resolution: First, is it appropriate for Congress to

express its views on the escalation of U.S. troops in Iraq? And second,

is the escalation the best use of military forces in our war on

terrorism?

First let me say that it is wrong for anyone in this debate to

question the

patriotism of someone on the other side of that issue. That tactic was

tried by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s. It was wrong then, it is

wrong now.

In our democracy, there is nothing patriotic about questioning the

patriotism of someone with an opposing view. We all love our country;

we all support our troops; and we all want to defend America from

terrorism.

On the appropriateness of this resolution being before the House, I

believe this debate is consistent with our Founding Fathers' deep

commitment to the constitutional checks and balances of government.

They chose to make the President our Commander in Chief of the Armed

Forces. At the same time, they chose not to give the President the

authority to declare war or to fund a war. Those solemn

responsibilities were given to the Congress in article I of the

Constitution.

It is noteworthy that on the most solemn act of government, to put

citizens into harm's way, our Founding Fathers clearly chose to put in

place constitutional checks and balances on the executive branch. This

resolution is a proper exercise of that constitutional principle,

especially given this war has now lasted longer than America's

involvement in World War II, with no end in sight. Blind allegiance to

the executive branch is not a constitutional principle.

The second question before us is whether the escalation in Iraq is

the best use of U.S. military forces in our war on terrorism.

After nearly 4 years of combat, two facts are indisputable: First,

our service men and women have served our Nation with courage and

professionalism. They and their families have sacrificed above and

beyond the call of duty, and I salute them.

Second; there have been major mistakes made by policymakers in

Washington that have complicated at every step the challenges our

troops have faced in Iraq, dead wrong intelligence on weapons of mass

destruction and Iraq's involvement with September 11; rejecting General

Shinseki's call to send an adequate amount of troops to Iraq in 2003,

the disbanding of the Iraqi Army, the de-Baathification process,

inadequate armor for our troops; and the repeated assertion that the

insurgency was on its last leg, despite facts to the contrary.

Given mistakes made in the build-up to this war and its management,

and the enormity of this issue in terms of lives at risk and our

Nation's future, it is time for Congress to give a voice to the clear

majority of the American people who oppose escalation in Iraq.

Since the President has already started the escalation, I personally

hope and pray that he is right, and that more U.S. troops in Iraq will

lead to long-term stability there. However, in good conscience, I must

express my profound concerns for this policy for several reasons.

First; I believe until the Iraqi government creates a government that

is respected by Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds, no amount of U.S. forces can

stop sectarian violence there in the long run.

Second; I want U.S. forces fighting terrorists, not standing on

street corners in Baghdad as target practice for Sunnis and Shiites

locked into deep-rooted sectarian violence.

Third; I believe it is necessary to send a blunt wake-up call to the

Iraqi political leaders that America has sacrificed our sons and

daughters and hundreds of billions of dollars for their nation, but we

will not do so forever for an incompetent government that is rife with

corruption and sectarian bias. This is not a test of America's will,

rather, it is a test of the Iraqi government's will to make the tough

choices to ensure its nation's own future.

Fourth; with the increasingly serious situation in Afghanistan, where

al Qaeda and the Taliban are resurging, we will definitely need

additional U.S. troops there to prevent the kind of chaos that is

rampant in Iraq.

For these reasons I believe this resolution is the appropriate and

the right thing to do. This resolution will send an unequivocal message

to the Iraqi political leaders that the time to end their corruption,

their incompetence, and sectarian favoritism is over. When that message

is truly heard, then and only then will there be real hope for stable

and lasting peace in Iraq.

I urge support of this resolution.