Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague, the

gentlewoman from California, and I rise to thank our young men and

women in our armed services and their families, those who have

understood the sacrifices that they have made on behalf of our great

Nation.

But Mr. Speaker, I also rise to speak out in strong opposition to

President Bush's misguided escalation of troops in the Iraq War and to

commend the Democratic leadership of this House for holding a real

debate on our involvement in Iraq.

Since January 4, when Speaker Pelosi took the gavel, the Democratic

majority has delivered on its pledge of oversight and accountability of

this war in Iraq, and Democrats have changed the direction of the

discussion and have changed this war to lead us to the ultimate goal of

all Americans, that is, to bring our troops home.

For too long, Congress has taken a backseat on the President's

handling of this war, but this majority has held more hearings on Iraq

than the Republican-controlled Congress did since this war began.

This debate is about not about trying to embarrass our President for

political purposes. We are debating the escalation because the American

people have demanded a change in direction. The President has failed to

recognize the will of the people and many of the top military and

foreign policy thinkers around the country who view this escalation

with little hope of success.

Our constituents spoke with their voices loudly on Election Day, and

they have been even more vocal since about the dissatisfaction with the

way this war has been managed. Many in this country want to see a

deescalation of America's forces, not the increase the President has

proposed.

The President and his advisors created this problem, and it is now on

the Congress to find a way to disengage Iraq without causing the

country and the region to be engulfed in a further outbreak of

violence.

In the last week, we have seen some of the most horrific bombings

that cost the lives of hundreds of Iraqis and the downing of several

U.S. helicopters. Over 3,000 of our young American men and women have

lost their lives; tens and thousands have been physically and mentally

maimed; and hundreds of Iraqi citizens, the vast majority of them

trying to live normal lives, have been killed or injured.

This was not how this war was to be conducted.

Four years ago, when this President came to the Congress for

authorization to invade Iraq, he stated that Iraq posed a clear and

present danger. He talked about how invading Iraq was part of the

greater war on terror and how, if Saddam Hussein was not toppled, he

would attack our allies and maybe even on our own soil.

After seeing the death and destruction al Qaeda did to my city on 9/

11 and to our Nation, I wanted to trust our President and all the

President's men and women. When I sat across the table in the Roosevelt

Room in the White House from Condoleezza Rice and then-CIA-Director

George Tenet, I thought I could trust them. Because of them and the

false intelligence they gave, I voted for authorization of this war.

As the only Member of this Congress to lose a relative on 9/11 and as

someone who has lost 125 constituents to the attacks of the Twin

Towers, I do believe that America must always act to defeat threats

before those threats act against us.

As they say, in life, there are no do-overs; and if I could turn back

time, I am sure that most of the Members of this House and most of my

colleagues in this House would never have given this President this

authority to wage this war in Iraq.

This war has cost us a fortune from our national treasury, a fortune

in American lives lost and ruined, and a fortune in our ability as a

Congress to trust our Commander in Chief and our President.

Today, we have an opportunity to stand as a group and to say what our

constituents want us to say, to say what the Army generals want us to

say, to say what many of them, those men and women in our Armed

Services in uniform on the front line want us to say: ``Mr. President,

adding more troops is not the answer. Adding more troops to fight what

has become a civil war is not the answer.''

The answer is we need to start to begin to bring our troops home,

reducing our presence in Iraq, and create the conditions for the Iraqi

people themselves to stand up and secure their own country.

The Iraq Study Group set out a plan that many of us support, but the

President continues to believe that history will judge him favorably.

As the Iraqi government attempts to clamp down on the Shi'a and Sunni

militias, it has become abundantly clear these forces are not as strong

as we have been led to believe, those being the Iraqi government's

forces. I believe we need to look strongly on redeploying our troops in

Iraq along the border and in the Kurdish north, removing American

citizens from harm's way in Baghdad and Anbar Province, and forcing the

Iraqis, both politically and militarily, to secure these areas. U.S.

troops should only be used in an advisory role, not in direct combat.

Mr. Speaker, I have more to submit for the Record, but I want to send

our young men and women home as soon as possible and an end to putting

them in harm's way.

Only when the violence stops should the U.S. in small numbers work

with Iraqi and multinational forces in keeping the peace, building the

military infrastructure and securing long term stability.

Right now, with the exception of Great Britain and a few other

countries we are doing all the work, taking all the risk, and losing

our best and our brightest while the Iraqis lay waste to their country.

It is time for us to get back to our roots and be the beacon of

freedom and democracy that we are.

We need to increase our conversations with the moderate Arab states

and get them invested before Iraq, and possibly the whole region, is at

war.

The focus should be making sure that countries like Iran and Saudi

Arabia are not funding Sunni and Shia extremists, respectively.

Diplomacy is not the end all fix, but it is a start.

Whether or not my colleagues want to refer to the President's plan as

a surge or escalation, I see it as a target on the backs of our armed

forces.

This resolution clearly states that the House does not support the

escalation, but we will not abandon the safety of our troops by cutting

off the supplies they need for force protection.

I do not support this escalation.

Instead of bringing our troops home President Bush has decided to put

even more of our overburdened arm forces in an increasingly sectarian

bloodbath.

Our country has been asking for answers to why our men and women of

the armed forces continue to die in Iraq and we have not received any

answers.

Until these answers are forthcoming, I will not support the

President's escalation and I wholeheartedly support this resolution.