Mr. Speaker, I support the troops wholeheartedly and

without reservation, but I cannot support a resolution that simply

opposes a new strategy without offering an alternative plan to win.

There is too much at stake.

Many of you know that I was a cop in the Seattle area for 33 years. I

was the sheriff for 8 years. And as the sheriff I had an opportunity to

attend a remarkable ceremony. Every year a group of naturalized

American citizens gathered to remember the circumstances of their

arrival in the United States.

The group is comprised of police officers from Vietnam, men that

fought side by the side with our American soldiers. These Vietnamese

officers assumed the greatest risks, risking their lives and

endangering their families, to join the United States in their fight

for freedom.

When the United States pulled out of Vietnam, there were dire

consequences for these brave men who risked everything to fight for the

United States. The officers were rounded up. Some were imprisoned for

15 years or more and some were executed.

Those who managed to flee and escape death made their way to the

United States. They left everything in Vietnam, and made new lives in

the United States. And they were able to enjoy the freedoms that they

had fought for, but not in the country that they had hoped for.

Let me just take a moment to set the stage for this ceremony. As the

sheriff, I sat down at a round table with many of these Vietnamese

soldiers and police officers. They came in their uniforms that they

brought along with them, those that were able to escape, those that

spent 15 to 17 years in a prison camp where they were beaten, where

they were tortured, where they lost their freedom. They lost their

dignity, but they never gave up hope.

When they came here to the United States of America and they come

together on this evening to celebrate their freedom, and the American

flag is brought into that room, those men stand at attention and they

salute. But you know what else they do? They cry. When the American

flag is brought in, they cry because they lost their freedom. But now

they know what it is like to have it back. It is a dramatic scene.

If we leave too soon in Iraq, what happened to these Vietnamese

officers could certainly happen to those Iraqi soldiers who bravely

fought side by side with our troops today. I don't use this example as

a way of comparing this conflict with Vietnam, as some have done. I

believe that the two wars are very different. I use it because it could

happen again.

I never want to attend an event where former Iraqi soldiers are

attending a similar ceremony. The fact is that we are engaged in a

global war with people intent on killing us, killing Americans. And

regardless of how we got into Iraq, Iraq is now the central front of

this war.

I understand that there are many who think we should not have entered

Iraq. We now know there was faulty intelligence that led us into Iraq

and to make that decision. But the war is upon us nonetheless. I am

elected to deal with what is happening now.

The consequences of declaring an end to the war in Iraq without

victory would be felt for decades. Our enemies around the world would

be emboldened. Iran and al Qaeda would declare victory. Our allies in

Iraq would certainly face bloodshed and our allies around the world

would question our resolve to help protect them.

Our troops are clear about their dedication to their mission; they

want to succeed. American soldiers dutifully responded when we asked

them to go to Iraq and oust a dictator, establish an infrastructure,

and train the Iraqis so that they are able to protect themselves.

Now we must do what the troops have asked of us. They have given us

their service, and in too many cases they have given us their lives. We

must give them the opportunity for victory.

Our current strategy in Iraq is failing. And yet failure is not an

option, not only for the United States' security, but also for the

security of the Iraqi soldiers and police officers that still fight

today, side by side with our troops.

In November the American people told us that they wanted a new

strategy, not because they wanted to lose, but because they want to

win. And now we have a new strategy before us. Is this new plan going

to work? I don't know. No one in this body that will vote on this

resolution, this nonbinding resolution, knows whether or not this plan

will work.

But what I do know is that we first must find a way to achieve

victory. And simply saying ``no'' to a plan without offering an

alternative won't work, and it sends a terrible message to our enemies

and to our soldiers. This is an historic war. America is engaged in a

war for our freedom on a scale that we have never experienced before.

I understand the dissension, the questions, and the uncertainty. I

understand the cost is high and the way is unclear. As a cop, I have

lost partners, I have lost friends in the line of duty. I know the pain

that causes. I understand the loss. It is sad. It is tragic, and you

never forget. But we must remain focused, ladies and gentlemen. Please

don't let those sacrifices be in vain.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote ``no'' on this resolution

and let us send a message to our enemies and our troops alike, we will

always support our young men and women who put their lives on the line

for freedom and

that we will give them what it takes to succeed in the missions that we

have given them.