Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me

time.

Madam Speaker, I am hopeful today. Finally, 4 years into a very

controversial war, Congress will begin to fulfill its constitutional

responsibility as Representatives of the people. This week, every

Member of the House of Representatives has had an opportunity to

express their views on the war in Iraq. And today, every Member will

cast their vote for or against the President's escalation of the war.

This is only right.

For my part, I believe the President's proposed escalation would be a

tragic mistake. Our need for a change of direction could not be more

clear. But rather than change direction, the President proposes that we

continue down our current disastrous path, only at a faster pace and

with more human life placed in harm's way.

We should be bringing troops home, not sending more there. We should

be ending this war, not escalating it. Considering this resolution is

only the first step of many Congress will need to take to force a

change in direction, but as Thomas Jefferson once said, honesty is the

first chapter of the book of wisdom. Congress writes that chapter with

this resolution, but it is only the first chapter.

Sadly, the burden created by the lack of honesty and wisdom this

administration has brought to this conflict is shouldered by our brave

men and women in uniform. Two years ago, I spoke with a group of women

in Sacramento whose husbands were serving in the National Guard in

Iraq.

One woman told me she had to buy her husband a Kevlar vest and a

canteen before he deployed to Iraq, something all too many families

were doing for their loved ones because the military was not providing

it. A short time later, the administration assured the public that the

issue had been addressed. And yet just this week we heard reports that

the Army lacks armored Humvees and other equipment necessary for the

troop increase the President is implementing; once again, a failure in

vision and planning, and once again, our troops pay the price.

Escalation of this conflict will further increase the strain on a

military that is already stretched to the breaking point. Every Member

of this Chamber knows this. Earlier this month, I spoke with a friend

and reservist in Sacramento named Richard Beach. Richard shipped out to

Iraq 4 years ago as a chaplain in the Army Reserves. He is home now.

But he still keeps in touch with his old unit. Richard shared with me a

note he sent to some of his fellow members of the 114th.

He wrote, ``I remember 4 years ago we were getting ready for our trip

to Fort Lewis and then on to Iraq. I hope as the fourth anniversary of

the war comes up, you are all in good health and living life to the

fullest. I, too, pray that soon this war will end and we will stop

sending our soldiers off to war.''

Four years later, he reports that many of the same soldiers and their

families are making the same sacrifice. But that is a heartbreaking

reality here. Implementing the President's policy will mean that

members of his regiment along with so many others will have to endure

more and more of the back-to-back deployments to Iraq.

The notion of shared sacrifice is something that helped make this

country great. Americans are strong believers in shared sacrifice. But

all too often in this war, only our troops and their families share the

sacrifice. That is too much to ask on behalf of policies that have not

worked.

The administration offers us scant reason to believe this troop

increase will work when it has tried and failed with several previous

troop increases. This proposal offers us nothing but more of the same.

Our brave men and women in uniform have done everything that has been

asked of them. It is our political leadership that has failed. There is

a saying, It takes two people to speak the truth: one to speak it and

one to hear it. I hope the administration will choose to hear the truth

and I hope that we pass this resolution today.