I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution opposing the

President's decision to escalate this war. My position on the Iraq war

is uncomplicated. I voted against the initial war resolution back in

2002, mostly because I never believed the President made a compelling

argument that Iraq posed the sort of substantive threat to the United

States that would justify war, and the considerable human, political,

and financial costs that it would bring.

I thought it was a bad decision at the time, and I think it is a bad

decision today.

In my limited time this afternoon, I would like to comment on a

couple of refrains that we keep hearing. The first is the President's

repeated criticism that those who support this resolution are

prejudging a plan that hasn't even been ``given a chance to work.'' He

makes that charge with a tone of wonderment, as though somehow it

weren't our duty to anticipate the consequences of different courses of

action and to avoid the bad ones before embracing them. If more of us

had prejudged his 2002 decision, taking us to war before it was ``given

a chance to work,'' we wouldn't be having this debate today.

The difference between today and 2002 is that a majority of this

House and this Congress are no longer willing to give the President the

benefit of the doubt he enjoyed 5 years ago. We are no longer willing

to suspend judgment and trust the decider. That should surprise

precisely no one.

For 4 years we have been asked to trust this administration, to

trust, as the Vice President emphatically declared, that they knew

where the weapons of mass destruction are; to trust that the Iraqis

would welcome us as liberators; to trust that we had a large enough

invasion force to stabilize the country; to trust that the Shi'a would

find common cause with the Sunni and the Kurd in a united Iraq; to

trust that Iraq's oil reserves would pay for its reconstruction; to

trust that Iraq would serve as a beacon of democratic ideals throughout

the Middle East; to trust that those early signs of a growing

insurgency were nothing more than the ``last throes of a few dead-

enders.''

And now the President asks us not to prejudge his plan to put another

21,000 Americans in harm's way. He asks us to trust him yet again. With

respect and humility, Madam Speaker, I ask him, how can we? And how can

he even ask it of us? Paraphrasing the President, fool me once, shame

on you. Fool me five times, shame on me.

And another criticism of this measure that we have heard repeated

over and over this week is that, as a nonbinding resolution, its

passage and this debate is meaningless.

Madam Speaker, this resolution is far from meaningless. If need be,

Congress will end this war with binding legislation. As even the

President acknowledged, we retain the power of the purse, and we have

ample opportunity to exercise that power.

But just as wars should be started with a united government, so, too,

should wars be ended with a united government. And that is the

meaningfulness of this resolution. It is the last chance to draw this

government back together on Iraq. It is the last call for us to work

together, Democratic and Republican, legislative and executive, on

ending this war. It is the last call for the President to come back to

the people.

He may ignore that call. He may dismiss this resolution and this

debate as meaningless. He may dismiss the voice of the people expressed

through 439 newly elected Representatives as meaningless. But if he

does, Madam Speaker, he forces us to move forward without him. I hope

that doesn't happen.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this resolution, and I urge the

President to listen to this debate and to join with us.