Madam Speaker, given my tenure in the House

of Representatives, I have seen more than my fair share of good and bad

legislation come to the House floor. In addressing the nonbinding House

Continuing Resolution 63, I would like to take a step back and call

this bill what it is, it is a facade, and a political maneuver. If we

are going to spend four days discussing a piece of legislation, if we

are going to vote on something, we should vote on funding. Our power in

Congress is the power of the purse. If the Democrats have an action

item, we should get to the point; let us vote on funding the war in

Iraq, and stop making pointless partisan political arguments.

However, all of my colleagues are aware that a vote to stop funding

for the war will not pass, as the Republicans will not support it and

many Democrats would oppose such legislation as well. This is true

because we all have American resolve, meaning we will work together as

a country to finish what we began.

American resolve does not quit when a situation gets messy, we do not

tuck our tail between our legs and run away scared. My colleagues and I

are also aware that our legislative agenda does not exist in a bubble;

that there are many factors at play. If we do not have the intestinal

fortitude in Iraq, how will we be viewed by other countries like Iran?

It is vital to our prosperity that the United States maintains her

impenetrable stance in the international community. If the United

States is seen as a Paper Tiger there will be many deep, far reaching

implications; one of them being Iran's nuclear missile program, which

threatens the safety of the world.

In addressing the real threat posed by Iran, Ambassador Gregory

Schulte has explained that,

``The pursuit of nuclear weapons by the leadership in Tehran

threatens Iran's neighbors and threatens the wider world community. In

the Middle East, Iran's influence is rising. The fall of the Taliban

and Saddam, increased revenues from the high price of oil, the

electoral victory of Hamas, and the perceived success of Hezbollah in

attacking Israel all extend Iran's shadow.

He also stated that:

``A nuclear-armed Iran could embolden its leaders to advance their

ambitions even more aggressively across the Middle East. Even without

detonating a single nuclear weapon, the mere possession of an atomic

arsenal could encourage Iran's leaders to employ their conventional

forces and step up terrorism to advance their regional ambitions. Iran,

with Syria, is allowing terrorists and insurgents to use its territory

to move in and out of Iraq and is helping to train and arm militants

who are killing coalition forces and innocent civilians.''

In today's news, it was reported that Iraq had to shut down its

border with Syria and Iran. U.S. officials have long suspected Syria of

allowing foreign fighters to cross its long, porous border into Iraq,

and this past weekend evidence was presented of Iranian-manufactured

weapons being smuggled into Iraq. We will be paving the way for Iran

and Syria to be the victors if we do not allow our troops the full

force of our assistance in Congress.

I would like to be the bearer of a positive aspect of our work in

Iraq, highlighting some major accomplishments achieved by our leaders

and troops. Here is the positive side of the story that is rarely

brought to light or reported on in the mainstream media:

Free Elections are transforming Iraq. In 2005, Iraq held two

parliamentary elections and a constitutional referendum, with turnout

increasing each time cumulating in 76 percent of registered voters

participating in the December 2005 elections.

Economic recovery is picking up. The International Monetary Fund

estimates GDP grew by 2.6 percent in 2005, and is expected to grow by

10.4 percent in 2006, adjusted for inflation.

A stable currency, introduced in October 2003, has allowed the

Central Bank of Iraq to manage inflation; the IMF estimates inflation

was 32 percent in 2004 and remained stable at this level in 2005.

Iraq is rejoining the international community. It is on the road to

WTO accession, and received both an IMF credit facility and its first

World Bank loan in 30 years.

Debt relief agreements are helping Iraq with its economic outlook;

Iraq has secured an agreement to forgive at least 80 percent of its

Saddam-era debt.

Foreign and domestic banks are opening new offices.

The stock market established in April 2004 currently lists nearly 90

companies.

Iraq had virtually no cell phone subscribers in 2003. Today, there

are more than 5 million cell phone subscribers, and an estimated 2,000

Internet cafes.

Seventy-seven percent of Iraqi businessmen anticipate growth in the

national economy over the next 2 years, in a recent nationwide poll,

and 69 percent are ``optimistic'' about Iraq's future.

In conclusion, we must stand behind our troops, military commanders,

and our Commander in Chief. We need to finish the job and secure areas

in Baghdad and the Anbar Province. We must secure the situation on the

ground so Iraq can establish the rule of law. We must provide this

secure environment so social and economic development can take place.

Finally, we must protect the population and critical infrastructure.

These are fundamental elements of counter insurgency strategy. These

fundamental elements simply have not been able to take hold due to the

amount of insurgents in the area and their ability to overturn our

previous work.

I beg of my colleagues to refuse to allow our troops to become a

casualty of partisan rhetoric. If we want to win the war, then we have

one option. Support them. Support the mission. Support the military

intelligence officers focused on this victory. Refuse to quit, refuse

to weaken, and allow the counter insurgency this chance to succeed.