Madam Speaker, today is a day that we will look back on

and know that fundamental decisions regarding our Nation's history were

made.

The discussions that we are engaged in will go a long way in

determining our future in the ongoing global war on terror and Iraq's

role in that fight. When this vote is cast on the non-binding,

Democratic resolution, we will be sending a message to the world. The

only question remaining is what message will we send?

Will we say that America remains steadfast against the rising tide of

hate and intolerance offered by militant Islamists? Will we say that we

don't have the stomach to finish the fight against terrorists who

actively seek to kill us and destroy our way of life?

The war in Iraq has become such a flashpoint that we struggle to

separate the politics of the situation from the reality. The politics

attacks the intelligence that led us to war, questions our Nation's

elected leadership, and condemns the decisions made along the way. It

leads to the resolution that we now have before us. The reality

recognizes that we are at war now and our troops are putting their

lives on the line each and every day. It says that if this is a fight

that we believe in, a fight against global terrorism, we must do

everything possible to support the men and women who are carrying it

out on our behalf and never giving a hint to the contrary.

Unfortunately we are at a point today where some have forgotten

exactly who and what we are fighting.

Prior to 9/11, we failed to understand the hate of people like Osama

bin Laden and what could result from it despite all evidence to the

contrary. In 1979, 66 American diplomats were held hostage in Iran for

444 days; in 1983, 241 Marines were killed in Beirut when their

barracks was attacked; militant Islamic terrorists bombed the World

Trade Center in 1993; 225 people were killed in attacks

on U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998; and, in 2000, 17

American sailors were killed when al-Qaeda attacked the U.S.S. Cole.

Today we are at a historic crossroads: we either boldly tackle the

issue of militant Islam that exists on the Iraqi front and is part of

this world-wide struggle, applying the lessons we have learned from the

years leading up to 9/11, or we approach the issue as we naively

demonstrated before 9/11 and expect more attacks and more American

deaths.

The war in Iraq has gone on longer than any of us would have wished.

We've seen too many funerals for too many sons and daughters, husbands

and wives. To all those who have lost a friend or loved one, our hearts

go out to you.

It should be noted that mistakes have been made, of that there can be

no doubt. We must know without question what led us to this point, and

that time will come. But now is not that time. Not while we still have

American service men and women in harm's way. History will play its

part, teaching us our mistakes and urging us not to repeat them. But we

don't have the luxury of waiting on history to pass its judgment.

Without resolve, it is certain we will fail in Iraq and there will be

far-reaching consequences for our Nation, the region and ultimately the

world. Since September 11, there have been major terrorist attacks in

Karachi, Bali, Moscow, Casablanca, Riyadh, Istanbul, Madrid, London and

Amman. If we allow the terrorists present in Iraq to win, we can expect

more of the same. We can expect to see another Afghanistan--a puppet

government established to support and back the aims of their terrorist

masters. This is totally unacceptable.

Victory in Iraq is our only option. It is the only path through which

we can hope for peace. Without victory, our terrorist enemies gain

confidence in their opposition to the United States and their ability

to defeat us militarily. We embolden them and offer them the

opportunity to further their attacks against American men, women and

children.

The resolution that we are debating will send a message to the world.

What will that message be? My fervent hope and prayer is that it will

be a message of resolve, a message of strength, a message of victory.

Now is the time to support our troops in the field unequivocally and

vote against this nonbinding resolution. We don't want anyone to

construe our action here today as not fully supporting our men and

women who serve us in Iraq.