Madam Speaker, as an elected representative of our brave

men and women serving in harm's way, every vote regarding war is a

solemn matter.

Debate about the war in Iraq is necessary, required, and many

important points were brought up over the more than forty hours of

discussion.

No doubt about it, there have been setbacks in Iraq. And mistakes

have been made on the ground and here in Washington. It's safe to say

that all of us--the President, the Congress, and the American people

wish we could have achieved stability in the region sooner.

However, I believe it's necessary to separate the resolution being

debated in the House from the real issue. The real issue is that a

failed state in Iraq would present a serious threat to the United

States' national security interests, could allow terrorists to further

establish safe-havens in Iraq, and could create regional and global

unrest for many years to come. This is a threat we must not pass on to

our children and grandchildren. September 11th showed us that

terrorists can reach our soil and kill innocent Americans. We must

fight this war on our terms, but on their turf.

This non-binding resolution, H. Con. Res. 63, is nothing more than an

opinion about a strategy.

While opinions are interesting, solutions are necessary.

So I say to those who want to support this non-binding resolution: If

you disagree with the strategy--put forward a plan; if you disagree

with the tactics--put forward an alternative; if you disagree with the

mission--put forward a solution.''

A non-binding resolution means non-leadership; a non-binding

resolution means non-accountability. A non-binding resolution is not a

plan for victory.

This week, Congress has spent a lot of time debating one of the most

important issues facing this body. Unfortunately, this legislation

limited a true debate on the alternatives and direction we can take.

A real resolution on Iraq needs to include real benchmarks and real

guidelines, not simply a vote of no confidence.

There are those of us who are willing to disagree with the President

at the strategic, tactical or project level, and a true solution would

be for Congress to debate the McCain-lieberman proposal. This

bipartisan alternative not only reaffirms Congressional support for our

troops, but provides military, political, and social benchmarks for the

Iraqi government. This approach lays the groundwork for not only

victory, but also brings our troops home as soon as possible.

We owe it to our troops and their families to provide the necessary

oversight to ensure any new strategy is successful, while at the same

time giving our troops confidence that Congress will not cut off their

funding to settle policy disputes while they are separated from their

families by distance and danger. I continue to stand, ready, willing

and able to contribute to that oversight.