Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this

resolution.

Four years ago, President Bush plunged our Nation into a misguided,

pre-emptive war with Iraq. I voted against authorizing it then--and I

have come to the floor today to affirm my strong opposition to this

irresponsible war.

Unfortunately, after 4 years of failed strategies by this

administration, the President is now poised to confound his tragic

blunder, and ignore the will of the American people, by attempting to

increase our presence in Iraq. And that is why this resolution is so

important. Because it sends a strong statement. A statement that the

vast majority of the country supports. And that is: escalating our

presence in Iraq will not lead to success in the region, and more blank

checks will not make America more secure.

Madam Speaker, our brave men and women in the military have done all

that is asked of them over the course of the last 4 years. They are

heroes who represent the finest our country has to offer--and they

should be treated accordingly. But, from day one, this administration

has spent more time planning its attacks on those who offered

legitimate criticisms of the war and its tactics, than it has on

planning for a stable and peaceful reconstruction of the region. And

the results have been devastating and unworthy of our brave men and

women serving in harm's way.

Enough is enough. Troop surges have not worked in the past, and there

is no evidence that the same failed policies will work today. In fact,

former Secretary of State Colin Powell said in December, ``I am not

persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the purposes of

suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil war, will

work.'' Yet, this administration continues to ignore the guidance of

military experts, the Iraq Study Group, diplomats, decorated war heroes

and former senior White House officials of both parties.

And rather than being open to debate and discussion with these

experts, this Administration has routinely attacked their character and

questioned their patriotism. Many of these individuals have bled on the

battlefield. But to this administration, and its swift boat

strategists, they are treated merely as political pawns. It is truly

shameful.

Because of this Administration's hubris, we have seen troops without

proper equipment, without basic body armor, without vehicles equipped

to deal with roadside bombs and without the appropriate veteran's

services when they return home.

Because of their ignorance, we have seen giant banners saying,

Mission Accomplished, when today Iraq has spiraled into a bloody,

religious civil war.

Because of their arrogance, we were told that we were going to be

treated as liberators, not as occupiers.

And because of their incompetence, we were told that future oil

revenues would more than cover the cost of the reconstruction.

They could not have been more wrong. The cost of the war continues to

grow at an outrageous rate. To date, we have spent approximately $379

billion on this war, with estimates from some experts saying that the

total long-term cost could exceed $1 trillion.

Think about that for a minute: $379 billion spent, more than $8

billion a month. That is enough to fully fund Head Start--100 times

over. To give virtually every student in America a computer. Pay for

prescription drug coverage for virtually every senior in our Nation.

Offer summer jobs to every teen in our country. Put hundreds of

thousands of additional police officers on the streets. Provide

millions of scholarships to public universities for deserving students.

And pay the salaries of millions of public school teachers.

But what do we have to show for that $379 billion--a country plagued

with hardened religious sectarian violence.

Madam Speaker, it is time to stop this charade. It is time for the

truth. It is time for the administration to really level with the

American people.

Resurrecting and rehashing failed policies of the past is not the

answer.

Real action is needed. Leadership is needed. Courage is needed. And

that is why we are engaged in this debate--to stand up to the deception

and the dishonesty.

We are here today to begin to set our strategy back on the right

course. To protect our soldiers. And to ensure that we can win the real

war on terror.

Madam Speaker, we are here today as patriots because we love our

country. We are here because we support our troops. And we are here

because we want our troops to be able to come home to their families

and loved ones.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, I urge a ``yes'' vote on this important

resolution.