Madam Speaker, I stand before you today, offering a

candid reflection of the tasks before us. As someone entrusted to be a

leader in this great nation, I find myself humbled by the decisions we

make and the traditions of this institution. In times of hardship,

America has often looked to the House of Representatives, the

``people's house,'' as a place for deliberation and decision. Many

great leaders have preceded our place in this Chamber, and many more

will undoubtedly follow. By design we find ourselves here again today,

in the footprints of those who stood so firm against the winds of

adversity. It was in this very room that President Franklin Roosevelt

so famously addressed the Nation after the tragic events surrounding

Pearl Harbor had unfolded; and Members of Congress were faced with the

daunting effort of placing our nation in a second world war.

America was forged long ago as a beacon of democracy, shining bright

onto the shores of the world. Ever since our bold proclamation to

others that we would shelter ``your tired, your poor, your huddled

masses yearning to breathe free,'' we have called on this body to answer

the question: How tired, how poor, how yearning must the oppressed be

to warrant our assistance? And so we find ourselves here today, paused

at an intersection on the road of democracy. Will we turn back and

embolden those that oppress the free and murder

the innocent? After careful consideration, I must vote against this

resolution and choose instead to follow the path blazed by those who

pledged our commitment to freedom.

On September 11, we were forced to witness the consequences of a

decade of inaction against a determined enemy. Osama bin Laden and

other radical Islamists, have declared war on every American, for no

other reason than we practice freedom and democracy. Beginning in the

1970s, radical Islamists began targeting America with a steady campaign

of terror. Although the images of that tragic September day remain

seared in our minds, it forced us to awaken from our long period of

denial and realize the true determination of our enemy. The war in

Afghanistan and subsequent invasion of Iraq have discouraged any major

terrorist attack from occurring on our soil in the last 5 years. Our

enemy is patient, calculating, and determined. However, by supporting

Iraq's efforts to become a free and Democratic society, we have forced

the terrorists to focus their resources in the Middle East and away

from American soil.

The only impact this resolution will have: is embolden our enemy and

convince them of our weakness. The overall commanding officer in Iraq,

General David Petraeus, recently agreed that a resolution such as this

would only ``give the enemy some encouragement.'' Although I will

continue to be an advocate of free speech, we must remain aware of our

speech's impact. One can only imagine the result here at home if we

formalize a resolution of no confidence in this body.

As a member of this body, I have made clear my support for the war in

Iraq and our fighting men and women. I stand behind our military and

appreciate the importance of our mission, but am also aware that some

mistakes have been made along the way. War is unpredictable and we can

do no better than by putting our armed forces in the capable hands of

our military leaders. We owe it to the generations of Iraqi's murdered

under the reign of Saddam, and our brave country men and women who have

paid the ultimate sacrifice, to move forward with our mission.

The decision to commit our military to harm's way, is the toughest

made of any leader. Some of my colleagues in Congress will argue that

we cannot afford to vote in approval of the job our military men and

women have done in Iraq. After looking at the facts, I say we can't

afford not to. This non-binding resolution being offered by Democrats,

is little more than a political sound bite. Although I have respect for

many of my colleagues across the aisle, I urge them to consider the

negative effect this resolution will have.

It should be clear to all that have listened to this debate, that

this resolution is the first step by the majority party in their quest

to cut off funding for our troops in Iraq. This is not fair to our

soldiers on the ground and it dishonors the fallen and injured heroes

that have so bravely served this Nation.