I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the debate we join today is essentially over the matter

of sending 20,000 more American troops into Iraq. Over the past 2 days,

some deeply felt sentiments have been expressed in this Hall by some

patriotic and honorable Americans from all walks of life and on both

sides of the aisle.

And I respect and appreciate the intensity of those feelings.

If this were the only issue, if the matter were only a matter of

troop strength and numbers, then the issue would lend itself to

military and strategic solutions and we would not be having this

debate.

That is not the real issue, however. That is not the reason that

every Member of this Congress is being granted the opportunity to speak

on this issue. No, my fellow Members of Congress, the real issue we are

addressing today is not that simple. The real issue goes to the very

heart of our American democracy.

Last November the American people voted for a change in leadership.

They did so overwhelmingly because they want a new direction in Iraq.

The American people also voted for a new Congress, because they had

lost faith in the old one. As a Congress, we had lost our footing, and

as a result, our Nation lost its way on the international stage.

I believe that last November's call for a new direction in Iraq is

also rooted in our lost faith in those who are leading that nation.

We were stung when Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki seemed to offer

amnesty to Iraqi insurgents that killed Americans.

We have been robbed by the disappearance of billions of dollars sent

to Iraq in good faith to help build the country.

We have been deceived by the promise of trained Iraqi police forces

who should be prepared to provide law and order for their country, but

instead ally themselves with insurgents.

I traveled with some of you to Iraq last Memorial Day, and enjoyed

what I thought was one of the best meetings of the trip with the Iraqi

Speaker of the Council of Representatives. The optimism I felt

following that meeting was destroyed when, just days after our return

home, I heard the Iraqi Speaker denigrating American efforts in his

country.

We in the new leadership of Congress do not stand here as defeatists

and not as opponents of this Nation's best interest. Only fools could

reach that kind of conclusion from this discussion. We stand here today

to say there is a victory to be achieved, but it is not a military

conquest.

The victory we seek is earned through the restoration of America's

role as peacemaker, not warmonger. It begins with the restoration of

this Congress, as the deliberative arbiter and representative of the

best interest of the American people. It begins with the understanding

and acceptance of this Congress as a full partner in the future of this

activity.

Many of us have seen firsthand and witnessed firsthand the realities

of our presence in Iraq. Many of us have informed ourselves as fully as

possible on the complexity of the problems we face. Many of us have

agonized over the dangers and hazards which lie ahead, no matter which

direction we take. We do not take these steps lightly.

Now we stand ready to create new paths to new victories. We stand

ready to initiate the kind of victories, which will restore America's

respect around the world and self-confidence here at home.

We cannot achieve this by military might, but by diplomacy. The need

for a stable Iraq is not just an American interest, it is a regional

and global concern.

Iraq's neighbors must be brought to the table. American troops must

disengage from the Red Zone and redeploy to the outskirts of Iraq where

they can remain at the ready and not serve as targets for insurgents.

The best way for the Iraqi Government to gain the trust of the

American people is for them to step up and take control of their

country's security.

We say today that the victories we seek are real victories, permanent

victories, victories of a Nation which still believes that the voice of

the people is our final and best judgment.

With this debate, we are taking steps to regain our footing as a

Congress and chart a new way forward on the international stage.

I am hopeful this debate will not only be heard, but will be accepted

as the moment at which America turned its face toward a triumph of

enormous proportions, a triumph for peace and a triumph for democracy

everywhere