Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of my constituents in Illinois to say,

as strongly as possible for myself and for them, that we reject

President Bush's decision to deploy more than 20,000 additional United

States combat troops to Iraq.

Tragically, the President and his administration are dealing with an

Iraq that exists only in their imagination. Bob Herbert said it well in

Monday's New York Times: ``We need to stop pretending that there is

something sane about continued U.S. involvement in this ruinous war. We

keep sending troops into the combat zone, and they keep sinking ever

deeper into the ancient Middle East sand. To keep sending young people

off to die in a war that everybody knows is pointless is criminal.''

Each time that the Bush administration has proclaimed that we must

stay the course because the war has just reached a turning point, that

turn has led to a dead end.

May 2003, President Bush declared ``Mission Accomplished.'' By the

end of 2003, 486 of our troops were dead and 2,408 were wounded. And

yet we stayed the course in Iraq.

In June 2004, President Bush said, ``We're handing over authority to

a sovereign Iraqi Government . . . a turning point will come in less

than 2 weeks.''

By the end of 2004, 1,334 of our troops were killed and 10,408 were

wounded. And yet we stayed the course in Iraq.

In June 2005, Vice President Cheney said, ``I think they are in the

last throes, if you will, of the insurgency.'' And in December 2005,

President Bush said `` . . . the year 2005 will be recorded as a

turning point in the history of Iraq, the history of the Middle East,

and the history of freedom.''

By the end of 2005, 2,180 of our troops were killed and 16,354 were

wounded. And yet we stayed the course in Iraq.

In May 2006, President Bush called the formation of a new Iraqi

Government ``a turning point.'' By the end of 2006, 3,001 of our troops

were killed and 22,736 were wounded. And yet we stayed the course in

Iraq.

And just last month, Vice President Cheney proclaimed, ``Well, I

think if you look at what's transpired in Iraq . . . we have, in fact,

made enormous progress.'' And President Bush told us that his new

strategy to escalate the war in Iraq ``will change America's course in

Iraq and help us succeed in the fight against terror.''

Since those remarks made just days ago, more than 120 troops are

dead, and yet once again we are being asked to stay the course in Iraq.

My colleagues across the aisle want to characterize this troop

increase, the fourth escalation, as a new direction. But the American

people know better. They recognize ``stay the course'' when they see

it, and they are saying no. And the administration continues the

charade that if you don't support this war and this escalation, then

you don't support the troops.

Shame on them. It is they who have failed to serve the troops who

have served us so well. From day one our troops were sent into the war

theater without the proper equipment to maximize their safety. Families

have bake sales to buy their loved ones better vests and helmets. Just

last month the Pentagon's Inspector General found that the Defense

Department hasn't been able to properly equip the troops it already has

with enough guns and ammunition to ``effectively complete their

missions.'' That is a quote. Soldiers are short body armor, armored

vehicles, and communication equipment. Imagine this war is costing $12

million every hour, 24/7 for 4 years, nearly half a trillion dollars,

and our soldiers don't have enough body armor, ammunition,

communications equipment?

If our troops aren't the priority, who is? Halliburton, Blackwater,

other corporate chums of the President? Don't lecture us about caring

for the troops.

The Executive Director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

recently said of our returning soldiers and marines, ``And when they

come home, there aren't nearly enough transitional care services, job

placement, transitional housing. It is just not there.'' Twelve million

dollars an hour to wage this war, and our veterans are returning home

without the proper care they need?

Our support for the troops compels us to oppose this war and this

escalation. Of the terrible options the President has left us after 4

years, the absolute worst is to continue to send our young men and

women in uniform to die in the meat grinder that is Iraq and to put

them in the cross-hairs of a civil war.

Speaker Pelosi has said that our goal is to end this war. We can

begin right here, right now, by passing this resolution.