I thank the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the debate over the last 2 days,

really dozens and dozens of speeches, and, frankly, speeches of

exceptionally high quality on both sides of the issue. I have listened

particularly to the speakers who were here in 2002 when the momentous

decision to go to war was actually made. Those who were opposed, I have

admired because in their opposition in October of 2002 they were taking

an unpopular position, but clearly one that they believed in, and I

think they deserve our respect for that, even if I don't agree with

that particular point of view.

Second, I have watched those who voted in favor of that tough

decision, and I have watched as they have stuck to that decision

because they believe the stakes are so important for the United States.

They have done so even when public opinion has turned against their

position. And I admire that.

Frankly, I have watched speakers who have changed their position, who

were first for the war and now are opposed to it. It is easy to deride

people in that position. But, quite frankly, I have watched them, and

they are anguished in their opinions and their conclusions; they are

sensitive, obviously, to the easy and cheap criticism of opportunism.

And I particularly admire those, frankly, in my own party who have

broken with their President and their party over a position that they

believe in deeply. I don't agree with them, but I admire them.

What I don't admire is the Democratic leadership that has brought us

a resolution which is divisive without being decisive. It orders no

action. I have spoken on that at length before, and I am not going to

go into it now. I want to instead focus on the issues at stake.

Like all of those elected in 2002, 2004, 2006, I was not part of the

initial decision to go to war, and, frankly, I often think how

fortunate I was to have been spared that responsibility. But, of

course, none of us on this floor ever truly escapes responsibility.

My attitude toward this conflict reflects that of my district and,

frankly, that of my father, who was a career noncommissioned officer in

the United States Army. I recall once when he was talking about war, he

summed it up pretty simply: When you are in it, win it.

That is what I have tried to do with my vote, my voice, my energy,

since I have been elected to represent my district. I have done so

because, frankly, in some areas I have seen progress. Removing Saddam

Hussein from power was a good thing and I am proud that that was

accomplished, and it would not have been accomplished without the valor

and the professionalism of American men and women in arms.

I am pleased to have seen a Constitution formed in Iraq that is the

envy of the Arab world.

I am proud to have seen three elections take place, all of which had

increasingly high participation and had, frankly, higher percentages

than vote in our own elections.

I was hopeful when I saw a coalition government formed that had

Kurds, that had Sunnis, that had Shia, that had other elements in the

Iraqi population.

I have been impressed with Iraqi forces that do stand and fight. And

let's make no mistake about it: Most of the fighting and dying

militarily is being done by Iraqis and they deserve our respect for

that.

And, frankly, I think like all Americans, I was enormously relieved

when I see actors like the late al-Zarqawi, people who would kill

Americans anywhere, anytime, who are not from Iraq, being sought out

with the help of Iraqis and killed far away from our shores. That is

important, and that is something we should acknowledge.

I have also supported the war because I feared the consequences of

defeat in Iraq. And, believe me, there are consequences to losing the

war. These are real.

If we are not successful in Iraq, we will have an emboldened enemy.

Not just the terrorists that we deal with, they are bad enough, but

also the states that use terrorism as a tool of diplomacy. States like

Iran, states like Syria, will draw comfort.

We will have demoralized friends in the region and around the world

that wonder whether or not they can really count on us once we make a

commitment.

We will see the death of an infant democracy, never a good thing for

the lovers of freedom.

We will see a sectarian bloodbath in Iraq that will result in the

death of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Iraqis.

And we will see a destabilized region in which the United States has

vital interests and to which our own security is intimately tied.

I acknowledge that things have not gone in Iraq as I, certainly, and

I think everybody, regardless of their position on the issue, would

have hoped. There is no question that we underestimated what was

required, not to defeat Saddam, frankly, that was done brilliantly, but

to secure Iraq.

We have underestimated the persistence of and the difficulty the

outside players would create for us. We underestimated how anxious

people inside Iraq would be to settle old scores instead of to look

ahead. And we have underestimated the impact of the divided loyalties

of Iraqis themselves, where so often we see sect against sect,

ethnicity against ethnicity, tribe against tribe.

But these difficulties and mistakes, regrettable as they are, do not

change the consequences of losing in Iraq, for the region, for Iraqis,

and, most importantly, for ourselves.

At this critical point, the President has offered a plan to avert

defeat, and, if the Iraqis are up to the task, to turn the tide. It has

an American military component, and that is what this resolution deals

with.

But contrary to what I have heard on the floor, it is not a major

escalation in forces. It is not an effort to allow the Iraqis to avoid

the fighting. Nor is it an effort to win militarily. It is an effort to

buy the time needed to create an environment in Iraq that will allow

Iraqis to succeed politically. It will allow them to begin to push

toward the reconciliation process and review the de-Baathification

program. It will allow them to share power with one another. It will

allow provisional elections to take place. It will allow oil revenue to

be distributed more equitably. It will allow Iraqi units the time to

train, stand up and continue to fight and fight more professionally and

proficiently than they have.

The U.S. force is indispensable in achieving these measures, but it

will not be and it is not intended to be decisive. What will win or

lose in Iraq ultimately are Iraqi politicians: Can they put their

differences aside? Iraqi soldiers: Can they fight for their country

instead of against one another? And the Iraqi people: Can they put

aside the differences and demand better leadership than they have

received thus far from their own people.

Some will say this is a hopeless task, but our military leaders and

our troops in the field don't tell us that. General Petraeus, a man

whom all sides acknowledge is not only professional, capable, but is

dedicated and a great patriot, tells us he thinks this is an achievable

mission if he has the forces he needs to succeed. The average soldiers

that I talked to from my district

and other units also tell me they believe this is doable. But they want

us in Congress and in this country to have the political resolve to

match their personal courage.

History teaches us that freedom is a powerful force. We should trust

it. And it also teaches us sometimes it needs outside help. All of us

as Americans are justly proud of the American Revolution. We often

forget it took a French fleet, French army and Dutch money to finally

finish the job.

Mr. Speaker, because I believe the consequences of losing in Iraq are

horrible for Iraqis, for Americans, and for the cause of liberty and

our friends around the world; because I think that we, the Iraqis and

the Americans together, can still win; because I believe that defeat

has catastrophic consequences for the United States, I urge the

rejection of this resolution and support the cause that our fighting

men and women are so nobly advancing in Iraq.