Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our

troops and dedicated civilian professionals, and to my former comrades

and friends now serving, and against the Democrat resolution

disapproving of reinforcing our troops in combat.

This week, Congress has spent its time debating a futile, nonbinding

resolution when, in reality, we should be debating policy initiatives

that will help our troops in their mission and lead to stability. I

believe that in fighting the war in Iraq that there is room for an open

and honest debate about the best way to advance the compelling national

security interests of this Nation. Honest debate, respectful

disagreement, and constructive dialogue are components of our great

Republic; and it is important to honor the process that our institution

provides.

Furthermore, this measure seeks to debate whether we support an

operational decision that, in reality, should be made by the commanders

on the ground, not by politicians in Congress. What are we going to be

debating next week, Mr. Speaker? Which block in Baghdad? Which precinct

to target? This nonbinding resolution serves no purpose other than

pacifying the Democrats' political base and lowering

morale in our military. At least one Democrat has likened this type of

resolution to a child stomping in the corner.

The troops will be doing their job by completing the mission that

they have been given, and we in Congress need to do ours. Our troops

who are fighting abroad do not get to debate the validity of their

mission. Their enemies are real, and they are fighting day in and day

out to protect our country, the Iraqi people and themselves.

This resolution does not help make progress in Iraq. It does not

provide a new approach in Iraq and does not make our Nation or our

troops more secure. That is what we need to be doing, not wasting our

time debating a measure that can dishearten and demoralize our citizens

faithfully serving in theater while encouraging and emboldening the

adversaries of stability.

We have seen the aggression of this faceless and cowardly enemy in

the bombing of Pan Am 103 in 1988, in al Qaeda's attack on the USS Cole

in 2000, and the tragic events of September 11. This enemy is driven by

hate and seeks to do Americans harm.

Over the course of time, it has become evident that we are involved

in a long-term struggle with Islamic extremism to preserve our freedom

and the freedom of the world. Every day, our men and women in uniform

and our civilian professionals risk their lives to protect our freedom.

From providing security to building an economy, we are strengthening

the security of our country and the international community.

We have not had a terrorist attack on our soil in over 5 years

because of our vigilance in pursuing the security of our Nation at home

and abroad. Success in Iraq is our only option for continued national

security and the preservation of freedom.

I have had the opportunity to speak to hundreds and hundreds of men

and women in uniform whose experience spans all ranks, all services,

and all units. Consistently, they share an optimistic and sober message

about the importance of continuing the struggle to defeat Islamic

extremists. A resolution like this blurs the many successes in the war

they have had against the extremists.

The messages of our troops do not come without an understanding of

the reality and the resources that we must commit to this mission.

Fighting the terrorists will require a strong commitment, and the road

to victory will be long. Our partners in Iraq have stated their

commitment to the mission, and we must stand behind them.

At the same time, the Iraqis must continue to assume responsibility

for their success as a nation and that our commitment is not open-

ended. Success in countering an insurgency largely happens outside of

the realm of combat. Security is only one aspect.

We must work on establishing frameworks within Iraq that can keep the

water running and the electricity on, which will in turn allow people

to go to work and children to return to school. Returning normal life

to Iraqis is important, but it should not be the sole responsibility of

our troops who are providing security and stability. We need to

strengthen the involvement of the international community in this

endeavor as we empower and engage the Iraqis.

I strongly believe that if we are to fully support our troops that we

must listen to what they are saying. And when the troops are saying

that they are committed to their mission then, I believe, we should

listen. I remain a committed supporter of our troops, and I thank them

for their service.

Soon, Congress will vote on the Department of Defense's supplemental

budget; and in it, the Pentagon is requesting $5.6 billion for troop

reinforcement. This will be the real test of commitment, not this

meaningless resolution. A ``yes'' vote on that funding supports the

troop reinforcement being debated here today, and a ``no'' vote will

delete funding for this important mission. This will not only show

people where Congress stands, but give accountability to our actions

here in Congress with the force of law behind it.

I support our troops and our civilian professionals, and I intend to

keep my commitment to my many friends on active duty and to vote to

provide them the funding for their mission when the time comes.

To my former comrades and friends in the 101st Airborne Division and

82nd Airborne Division, thank you for answering the call again and know

that I stand with you.