Thank you, Mr. Meeks, and also let me

thank my colleagues across the aisle for the solemnity of the debate

that has taken place over these last several days. I think it is so

important to the constituents that we are sworn to serve, and they

deserve to hear the voices that reside within the people's Chamber.

This debate, in so many ways, is an echo chamber for what Americans

already know. They have found their voice and expressed it in several

manners and several forms, most notably in last November's election,

where they called for a new direction for this country, not the staying

of the course that it is currently on.

It is long overdue then that the Congress find its voice as well.

Past is prologue, and we must go back to June of 2002 when the

President enunciated the Bush doctrine, the doctrine of preemption and

unilateralism that has placed us in this situation that we have today

in Iraq.

He was warned, most notably by people like Scowcroft, Eagleberger,

Baker, and Colin Powell about the folly of this effort. It was not

Kennedy or Berg or even Larson or other people that spoke out as

eloquently as those former members of Bush the Elder's Cabinet.

I traveled with Jack Murtha in the buildup to the war, and we met

with our ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Robert Jordan, who I said to him,

Ambassador, you have a gathering storm here in Saudi Arabia, with all

the tensions in the Middle East. And he said, Congressman, you are from

New England. Gathering storm, he said? What we have here is the making

of a perfect storm.

And if we unilaterally invade and attack this toothless tiger, Saddam

Hussein, we will unwittingly accomplish what bin Laden failed to do: we

will create a united Islamic jihad against the United States.

Professor Gram Ellison wrote that ``this occupation has diverted

essential resources from the fight against al Qaeda, allowed the

Taliban to regroup on Afghanistan, fostered neglect of the Iranian

nuclear threat, undermined alliances critical to preventing terrorism,

devastated America's standing with every country in Europe and

destroyed it in the Muslim world.''

Instead of following the wisdom of Scowcroft and Eagleberger and

Baker, Powell, this administration embraced Ahmed Chalabi with all the

hubris and arrogance of staying the course.

And so we find our troops today in the midst of civil war, in the

midst of sectarian, religious, and tribal conflicts that are more about

settling old scores that seek revenge over the centuries than about

creating a democracy. And it is into that caldron that we wish to send

more troops, more troops that 87 percent of the Iraqi public says they

want a time line for us to be out of there, and over 50 percent of them

think that it is okay to kill Americans.

Our troops need leadership that is worthy of their sacrifice. It is

important that this Congress on both sides of the aisle, as it has

done, understands the difference between the war and the warriors.

I conduct hearings back in my district; I listen to what my

constituents have to say. And, most earnestly, to those parents, those

men and women who come to these hearings and talk about their children

in harm's way: Carol Tripp of Bristol said it best, a woman with three

of her sons and her

husband stationed in Iraq, who hasn't shared a holiday dinner with

their entire family since 2001.

I define success by being able to look into their eyes and tell them

that the best path forward is the safe, secure, and strategic

redeployment of our troops so that our Army can regroup and restore

itself and proceed after the people who took the towers down in

systematic fashion to go after al Qaeda and continue to regroup.