Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has opposed this misguided version from

the war on terror from the very beginning, I believe it is way past

time for our country to take stock of where we have been, where we are,

and where we are going in Iraq. I think it is important to remember how

we got there.

President Bush told Congress and the American people that Saddam had

weapons of mass destruction and was an imminent threat to the United

States; that Saddam had ties to al Qaeda and the 9/11 attackers; that

the invasion, occupation, and reconstruction would cost us nothing;

that Iraqi oil revenues would cover all the costs.

So where are we today? We know that Saddam had no weapons of mass

destruction and that he posed no imminent threat to the United States.

We know Saddam had no operational relationship with al Qaeda. Eighty

percent of the Iraqi people want us to leave their country. The

invasion, occupation, and reconstruction of Iraq will cost us at least

half a trillion dollars, not to mention the cost in human lives and

international goodwill.

More than 3,000 American soldiers are dead, more than 20,000 American

soldiers are wounded. The burden of the Iraq war is being borne

exclusively by our children and grandchildren who will bear the debt,

and the families of our military personnel, who, at best, experience

long separations and terrible worry, and, at worst, lose a beloved

family member forever.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq has alienated our allies, has

called our credibility into question around the world. It has soured

Middle Eastern attitudes about the United States and Western democracy.

Finally, the invasion of Iraq got us into a long-term bloody occupation

of a country with no significant connection to the war on terror and

diverted critical military and intelligence resources from the fight

against al Qaeda.

The recently released National Intelligence Estimate concluded that

there is little prospect for political reconciliation in Iraq at this

time. So, what

should the United States do? What does victory in Iraq mean at this

point? Most of us would see victory as any kind of political settlement

that ended the violence, but the American people need to hear the

truth, and the truth is, there is no happy ending for Iraq as long as

our presence allows the Maliki government to avoid making the political

compromises necessary for peace in Iraq.

Now, the President has proposed a significant increase in the numbers

of U.S. troops serving in Iraq. I believe that Congress should oppose

this escalation. I don't believe it has any real chance of producing a

political solution in the war in Iraq or even curbing the violence in

Baghdad.

I am not alone in this belief.

General Colin Powell, General George Casey, General John Abizaid,

General Joseph Hoar, General Barry McCaffrey, Major General Don

Sheppard and General James Conway all question this escalation.

Now, many supporters of the President's Iraq policy ask what those of

us who oppose this military escalation would support instead. This

Member of Congress believes that the United States should begin an

immediate orderly redeployment of our troops out of Iraq with the goal

of completing that redeployment by the end of the year.

We should lead and enlist the participation of all neighboring

countries in a massive diplomatic surge to help contain the civil war

already underway, and that diplomatic surge should include all the

countries in the region, including Iran and Syria. The only way to

bring stability to that region is through a regional effort.

Our troops have performed with courage, compassion, and

professionalism. They did everything that was asked of them. Their work

in Iraq is done. We gave the Iraqis their freedom. It is up to them to

decide what they will do with it.

It is time for the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own

security. It is time for Iraqis to decide if Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds

wish to share resources, share power, and coexist peacefully as one

country.

America cannot force them to do this, no matter how long we stay

there. Only the Iraqi people can decide this.

Mr. Speaker, it is time. The American people have known for quite a

while it is time, and I believe this week that finally the United

States Congress will take the first step to bringing our troops home by

adopting this resolution