Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this stay-the-course

resolution, because it is, indeed, a stay the course. It says,

blithely, that we support the troops, the troops are in Iraq, they are

fighting. We support the fight.

We do not, on the other hand, support an escalation, which would be

another course of action, nor do we present the other alternative that

says bring them home. We can bring them home, increase or stay the

course, and so this stay-the-course resolution is one that is very

curious indeed today.

The last two speakers that I have heard say that there is no good

military action left. That is a credible viewpoint. It is one that is

expressed, and yet I ask my friends why did you not have the courage to

simply say, if there are no goodwill alternatives left for the

military, then bring them home. That is fair and adequate.

I have also heard that it is a misguided conflict. I have also heard

that our soldiers' work is done. If their work is done, please have the

courage to bring them home.

I want to speak today on behalf of our soldiers, the soldiers of

today. I will do it while remembering the soldiers of yesterday.

Through no fault of my own, I served in the Air Force during the

Vietnam conflict. I say through no fault of my own, because I was not a

volunteer. I got there because I drew a very low draft number. As time

has proved, it was going to be the only lottery that I am going to win,

but that lottery gave me a free pilot's certificate and sent me to

Vietnam to fly in 1971, 1972 and parts of 1973.

I was in Vietnam during the time that Jane Fonda made her trip to the

North, giving aid and comfort to the enemy. I was in Vietnam during the

time that there were demonstrations in the streets back home. I was

there during the time that our soldiers were cursed at and spit on.

Today, as I beat around the back dusty roads of New Mexico, I encounter

those same soldiers that I encountered back then. For those soldiers

who are my age, who are on walkers, life has been difficult.

There is a common greeting for soldiers of that era. It is welcome

home, brother, or welcome home, sister, because they were never thanked

for their duty and they were never welcomed home with parades with

yellow ribbons. We were snuck back into the country.

I have brought a couple of photos to help us remember, to remember

the people who were trying to get out of Saigon, not just Americans,

but those people who had sided with us. They are crawling up the ladder

trying to get into the helicopter. The helicopters proceeded out to

carriers, then the helicopters were pushed off the side of the

carriers. This is the way we left Vietnam.

I bring this up because I am beginning to see the same thing today.

My colleague yesterday spoke of this resolution and mentioned that the

resolution was vague, where people of very different beliefs could

believe that it represented them. If you support the war, you believe

that it supports your position. If you are opposed, you will somehow

believe that this is the one step that is going to stop us.

Yet it really does nothing, the vague language, that clever language

points out, this is not a time for cleverness, it is a time for

decision, because I will be a constant voice for our soldiers. I read

and I hear the comments today.

I read when Chrissie Hynde says, ``Let's get rid of all the economic

(expletive) this country represents! Bring it on. I hope the Muslims

win!''

I hear from the left, William Arkin, ``Those soldiers should be

grateful that the American public . . . do still offer their support to

them, and their respect . . .

``So we pay the soldiers a decent wage, take care of their families,

provide them with housing and medical care and vast social support

systems and ship obscene amenities into the war zone for them, we

support them in every possible way, and their attitude is that we

should in addition roll over and play dead.''

Our friends on the other side of the aisle, I do not discount their

intent, but I know what they are trying to do. They are doing the same

thing that was done in Vietnam: they are trying to feed that hungry

tiger that lives on the left, that hates the American way of life, that

hates the American military, that will do anything to discredit,

disrespect, and discount the service of our soldiers.

My friends, you will not be able to appease the left with this

toothless resolution that you are presenting. You know that your own

Members, some of your Members, have called for defunding; but defunding

is going to allow the exit that looks like this, and it is going to

allow the mass catastrophe, the mass killings that are going to occur,

and that is all part of the problem.

But before you allow your friends, who would never vote for me, who

disrespect our soldiers so much, before you empower them and before you

encourage them, I would recommend that you think carefully about just

cleanly bringing our soldiers home.

If you are going to do nothing in the resolution, you have an

obligation to do no harm. This resolution does no harm. This resolution

empowers our enemy, encourages our enemy, and encourages people who are

going to disrespect our soldiers. I recommend a vote against the

resolution.