I thank the gentleman.

This debate is late, very late, thousands of deaths too late. This

escalation scheme is an unmitigated disaster.

President Bush seems determined to continue to make the same old

mistakes, just make them a little bit bigger; defying sound military

judgment; defying the Iraq Study Group; defying the wishes of our

allies and the Iraqis themselves; and, most particularly, defying the

will of the American people.

This President continues to pursue a go-it-alone strategy in Iraq.

Like most every problem that he has created, and there are many, he

seeks only to pass it along to his successor, who we will elect next

year--pass along in this case what is no doubt the most colossal

foreign policy failure in American history.

The administration's top budget official told me in a hearing just

last week that ``the best minds in the Pentagon'' see no need to fund

this escalation, which has not yet really begun, for more than another

seven months. In truth, our military has been so overstretched that it

cannot sustain a prolonged escalation, even when it unfairly recalls

inadequately supplied troops for a second, third, and fourth tour of

duty. Little wonder that the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Gates, admitted

last week that he is already looking for another plan after this

escalation falls short.

This week, this House, we say ``stop the increase.'' And next, we

must begin the decrease with a phased withdrawal from Iraq. We should

not act precipitously, but we must move very expeditiously to extract

our troops from the crossfire of the warring factions in this civil war

quagmire.

To our troops, whose courage we honor today in this very resolution,

we say to you, those of who you who are out there on the front lines

today, we will do everything we can to protect you; but we will also be

working as hard as we can to bring you home safely to your families

sooner rather than later.

There is a better way to show support for our troops than just

sending more of them to be killed. There is a better way than

continuing to give this President a blank check for war funding. Unless

we move forward to place firm limitations on the appropriations, we

will leave this war-making President constrained only by Dick Cheney's

imagination.

The words of our adversaries in this debate have often been very

short, but their true conflict is not really with us; it is with

reality. They are in a losing war with the truth. Iraq has never been

the central front in the war on terrorism. Like the alleged connection

between 9/11 and Iraq, like the claim that Saddam's nuclear mushroom

cloud was looming just over the horizon, this charge is but another

falsehood foisted off on the gullible.

The central front on the war on terrorism was largely abandoned by

President Bush in his ideological rush to invade Iraq. Vital resources

and expertise that were needed to capture Osama bin Laden and the

terrorists who caused 9/11 were cut in Afghanistan when President Bush

ran into Iraq. The real war on terrorism suffered a major setback from

which today it has still never recovered. That is the only ``cut and

run'' that now endangers our families. Nor does this debate in the

people's House embolden the enemies of democracy when we exercise

democracy here in America.

To me, the terrorists seem mighty emboldened with their daily death

and destruction that they wreaked across the Middle East long before

anyone ever conceived this resolution. Frankly, it is the

administration that is the terrorists' top recruiter.

As we predicted at the outset, this war is creating new generations

of terrorists who view it as a war against all Islam. We cannot kill

our enemies fast enough with the current policies creating more of them

every day.

And now this President is stoking the flames of war with Iran.

Ironically, that is the only country in the world to have directly

benefited from his attacking Iraq. Widening the war to Iran with the

macho slogan that ``boys go to Baghdad, but real men go to Tehran''

risks an even wider, even more destabling debacle that can eventually

involve our families in a third world war.

Having failed entirely to learn any lessons from Vietnam, this

administration seems to already have forgotten our experience in Iraq.

Some here who profess to be conservative have been very liberal with

billions of misspent taxpayers' dollars and very liberal with the blood

of others in the sand of Iraq.

President Bush was absolutely correct when he personally declared his

war in Iraq to be a ``catastrophic success.'' He has certainly been

successful at creating one catastrophe after another in Iraq.

Our Nation is great enough with sufficient resources and creativity

to change course, but each day we delay we sink further into a quagmire

from which fewer and fewer choices remain. We must step back from the

abyss