Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for

yielding. I will overlook the ``ex-Marine'' slight. Never an ex-Marine;

always a Marine.

It is a tremendous honor for me today to even be on the same floor as

this great American here. We heard earlier today the hardship of some

of our servicemen and -women missing a holiday with their families, and

I know in my 25 years in the Marines I missed a number of those. But

there is nobody who has missed more holidays with his family than this

great American next to me.

We have heard a lot of speeches during this so-called debate. I am

not sure how much real debate there is, but certainly a lot of

speeches. Some of them have been very eloquent. I think of Mr. McHugh

the other night giving one of the best speeches I have ever heard on

the floor of this House. Some of them have been partisan. Some of them

have been shrill. Some persuasive; some not. We have heard a number of

opinions expressed, and it reminds me a week or so ago we had a hearing

in the Armed Services Committee and we had three experts, Ph.D.s all of

them, experts in the field of international relations and military

operations.

One of them, the former Secretary of Defense under President Clinton,

and it turns out that at the end of the hearing, each of the three of

them had a different idea about what we ought to do. None of them

supported what the President had been doing. One of them sort of

supported what the President was doing. But each of them had different

ideas. They had an opinion, arguably an informed opinion, but an

opinion nevertheless.

And on this floor we have heard more opinions. We have heard people

say, I don't agree with this; I think this is a bad idea; or I think

this is a good idea. We have heard some people say I have a better

idea; or I am a member of a caucus who has a better idea; or I propose

this; or I think that. And it kind of reminds me why it is a very bad

idea to conduct a war by committee. But I fully acknowledge that people

are allowed to have opinions and certainly every Member of this body

can have an opinion.

I remember the principal author of this resolution before us, the

distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, stood up on the

other side of the aisle here on the first day of this debate and he

said, ``Everybody is entitled to their own opinions but not to their

own facts.'' So I would just like to take a little bit of my remaining

time here to talk about some of the claims and some of the facts that

have been brought forward in this debate.

One of the proponents said the new plan ``ignores the recommendations

of the military commanders on the ground.'' How many times have we

heard that in these two days? Well, what is the truth? General

Petraeus, the new commander of the multinational force in Iraq,

confirmed by the Senate with no dissenting votes, said: ``If we are to

carry out the multinational force-Iraq mission in accordance with the

new strategy, the additional forces that have been directed to move to

Iraq will be essential . . . '' He said that last month.

General Odierno, a new U.S. commander, Corps commander, says: ``This

is about Iraqis taking charge of their own security. In order for them

to do that, we have to buy them time to continue to train and for the

government to become more legitimate to the eyes of the Iraqi people.

They are doing that by moving forward. By bringing more troops in, it

provides us the opportunity to work with them, to provide more time,

and defeat this threat, which is both al Qaeda threat as well as

sectarian violence.''

Even General Casey last month said he thought we needed more troops.

Another claim has been by one of our colleagues: ``Prime Minister al-

Maliki has indicated in virtually every way he can that he too opposes

the surge.'' And yet on January 13, Prime Minister Maliki said: ``The

strategic plan announced by U.S. President George W. Bush represents

the common vision and mutual understanding between the Iraqi Government

and the U.S. Administration''?

I have more examples here, but one that we have heard over and over

and over again in various forms was stated by one of our colleagues

yesterday saying: ``Our President, again, is ignoring . . . members of

the bipartisan Iraq Study Group who opposed this escalation.''

This is the book. I commend it to every American.

I would like to quote now from my dear, dear long-time friend and

hunting partner, the former Secretary of State, James A. Baker III, who

said on January 30 of this year: ``This is the language and all of the

language of the report with respect to a surge: `We could, however,

support a short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to

stabilize Baghdad or to speed up the training and equipping mission if

the U.S. commander in Iraq determines that such steps would be

effective.' The only two conditions are `short term' and `the commander

in Iraq determines it would be effective.' ''

Both of these conditions have been met.

There have been many claims of fact which I have some

counterarguments with.

I would just say to all of my colleagues that I would concur with

Chairman Skelton that we are entitled to our own opinion. We can

certainly express it. But we are not, in fact, entitled to our own

facts. So let's stick to the facts.