Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from New York for

yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose the escalation of U.S. forces in Iraq and I

strongly oppose this war. We had no basis or justification or right to

invade Iraq. It was a mistake. There are no easy answers or solutions

before us. No matter what option we pursue, there is no

nice, neat, happy ending. Sometimes you can't fix mistakes.

Hopefully we can make this awful situation less awful. This war

should never have happened. That is not just my opinion, it is the

opinion of many of the top military leaders in our country. The war has

diminished our standing in the world. It has been used as a recruiting

tool by the very terrorists we say we want to defeat. It has cost us

hundreds of billions of dollars. And, most significantly, we have

sacrificed the precious lives of so many of our brave servicemen and

women, and thousands more have returned home severely wounded.

Now, I have listened as many of my colleagues have come to the floor

and said we must follow our leader and be quiet. Some have even

suggested that those of us who support this resolution and want this

war to end are doing a disservice to our troops.

Mr. Speaker, for 4 long years, Congress has done absolutely nothing

in the face of mistake after mistake after mistake in Iraq. None of us

in this Chamber have to wake up tomorrow in Baghdad or Fallujah or

Tikrit. None of us have to wake up each morning and go on patrol in

Anbar Province. None of us in this Chamber are in harm's way. But we

are all responsible, all of us, just like the President, for assigning

tens of thousands of our bravest young men and women for being referees

in a sectarian civil war.

If we truly want to protect our troops, if we truly are concerned

with their safety and well-being, then bring them home and reunite them

with their families.

Newsweek columnist Anna Quindlen put it this way: ``There is no

better way to support those fighting in Iraq than to guarantee that no

more of them die in the service of political miscalculation.''

Mr. Speaker, the American people are way ahead of the politicians in

Washington. Citizens of all political persuasions are sick and tired of

the political spin and political posturing. Our focus should not be

about saving face. Instead, it should be about saving lives.

The people of this country have been misled, they have been deceived,

and they have been lied to. Increasingly, people do not trust their

government to tell the truth on the war. Mr. Speaker, I don't trust my

government to tell me the truth about this war.

There is no military victory to be had. The only hope is a political

solution.

The Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people have the power and the

ability to move in a different direction, a direction that seeks to

calm sectarian violence and heal sectarian divides, respect the rights

of all citizens and uphold the rule of law that applies to everyone

equally. But they have to choose that path themselves. Regrettably, I

have little confidence that the current Iraqi Government will make such

a choice. I hope I am wrong.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential to change the dynamic inside Iraq, and

to do that it is essential that we dramatically change our policy. That

means we must end the U.S. occupation and begin an all-out diplomatic

effort to promote reconciliation and an end to the violence. That means

we should begin the immediate, safe and orderly withdrawal of our

troops from Iraq. That means we should provide protection and political

asylum to those in Iraq who have assisted us and who may be in danger

because of it. That also means that the United States must demonstrate

the maturity and the common sense to talk to political leaders and to

countries we don't like, including Syria and Iran.

None of this will be pleasant, none of this will be easy and there

are no guarantees that it will work. But I am sure of one thing: What

we are doing now is failing. What we are doing now is not healing the

divisions in Iraq and is not serving the best national security

interests of the United States. Our own intelligence agencies have

reported to us that this war is creating more terrorists.

No one in this House enjoys this discussion. Some, I know, wish that

somehow this issue would go away. But, Mr. Speaker, it won't. So no

matter how uncomfortable this debate is for some of my colleagues, it

is long overdue.

The message that Congress will hopefully send tomorrow by passing

this resolution is one that the American people want us to send and one

that the President needs to hear.

President Lyndon Johnson once remarked, ``It is easy to get into a

war, but hard as hell to get out of one.'' The choices before us in the

next weeks and months will not be easy. Indeed, it will be difficult,

even painful, to extricate ourselves from this war. But it is the right

thing to do.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution which strongly

supports our troops and opposes this escalation