Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we continue here

on the House floor another chapter in the long and healthy debate on

promoting freedom and democracy around the world, while maintaining the

security of our country, of our cities, of our homes and our families.

The resolution before us today appropriately begins with the

reaffirmation of our vigorous, unwavering commitment to the brave men

and women now serving our country in uniform. We pledge to give them

every tool they need to fulfill their assigned missions while providing

the maximum protection possible. Additionally, we pledge their families

every means of support when their loved ones are overseas and when they

return home.

My district in eastern Washington is the proud home to Fairchild Air

Force Base that houses the 92nd Air Refueling Wing. These men and women

have been an important part of fighting the global war on terror. Our

community, like every community around the country, supports our men

and women in uniform. Together, we have celebrated victory; and,

together, we have mourned losses.

We unanimously stand by our troops because, almost 5 years ago, this

Congress asked them to step forward to protect our country and win the

fight against terrorism.

On October 10, 2002, before many of us were here, including myself,

296 Members of this body, including 81 Democrats, passed a bipartisan

bill authorizing the use of military force in Iraq. The next day, 77

Members of the Senate approved a motion authorizing the same use of

force.

What Congress realized then was the importance to the security of our

own country of a free and stable Iraq and a peaceful and secure Middle

East. Five years ago, Congress was at a crossroads and made a very

difficult decision. Today, young girls in Iraq can now attend school,

democratic elections have been held, a fledgling government is in

place, and Saddam Hussein, a murderer of over 300,000 Iraqis, is no

longer a threat to his own people or to our national security. In Iraq,

we have acknowledged victories and successes.

In the past year, we all recognize the condition in Iraq has grown

more grave. I know a lot has changed since I visited nearly a year ago.

Al Qaeda operatives, Sunni death squads and Shia militias, propped up

by the reckless dictatorship of Iran, have fueled violence and

threatened the hopes and dreams of the Iraqi people.

So Congress is once again at a crossroads. The reality of the

circumstances in Iraq require a winning strategy. The information

provided by our reformed intelligence community sends a clear warning

in the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq: ``Unless efforts to

reverse these conditions show measurable progress, the situation will

continue to deteriorate.'' The solution cannot be in leaving things as

they are. The NIE continues: ``Coalition capabilities remain an

essential stabilizing element in Iraq.''

There are three courses of action: leave things as they are; we know

this is not sufficient. Draw down Armed Forces in Iraq; this will only

lead to deadly indiscriminate violence, costing the lives of hundreds

of thousands of innocent people. Or respond by giving our commanders in

Iraq the resources and the mission options needed for success.

All of us here support our men and women in uniform. We must continue

to empower them to defeat the enemies of freedom in Iraq.

Congress is now in the midst of making a decision that will

contribute to the future security of our great country or begin the

process of chipping away at the core of this resolve. Supporting our

troops by not supporting the war is not an option. Victory is the only

real choice. The consequences of failure are unacceptable.

Abandoning Iraq would embolden the militants. It would create a

humanitarian crisis impacting millions. Instability in the Middle East

will create more violence and leave the U.S. vulnerable to future

attacks.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution.