Mr. Speaker, national security should be the highest

priority of the U.S. Congress. I talk to my constituents in western

North Carolina a lot about the situation in Iraq. We understand the

challenges. I think the American people understand the challenges of

this war. But we also know the consequences of quitting are too dire

and too dangerous.

We know that leaving an unstable Iraq endangers Israel, other Western

democracies, as well as our own national interests and our constituents

here in the United States.

The President put forward a plan that he and his generals believe

will lead to a safe, secure, and stabilized Iraq. Let me repeat that:

he put forward a plan, a plan of action and a plan for success.

The Democrats, in response, put forward a nonbinding resolution. Now,

this is Washington-speak for legislation that does not have the force

of law. Now, the disturbing thing is not that it is a nonbinding

resolution; but the message that this legislative tool sends, it sends

not only to our American people, not only to the troops in the field,

but our allies around the world, and it also emboldens our enemies.

This resolution says that this time the Democrats are not prepared to

offer a new direction, a plan or a solution for the challenges we face

in Iraq. I offer this bit of wisdom to the Democrats: you must be the

change you want to see.

If the Democrats are serious about developing a new plan, then the

right thing to do is submit it. That is a true test of leadership, to

submit solutions, solutions; and in order to effect change, you have to

put forward ideas for that change.

I ask the American people to imagine what it would be like if their

Representatives used this time to hammer out ideas and positive

solutions. That is the American ingenuity that we should focus on as a

Congress. This is the American way.

The Democrats say this debate is to send a message to the President.

Well, I will tell you, I think he has heard you loud and clear.

But let me give you a message from the battlefield from a friend of

mine in Iraq. He says the argument over what got us to this point is a

diversion. The problem set is the present. The terrorists and would-be

terrorists that have flowed into Iraq will not stand at the border and

wave us good-bye and good luck. They understand our politics, our

systems, and our weaknesses.

They believe that it is a war of endurance, and that we have shown

historically and repeatedly that we don't have the national will for

prolonged engagement.

Unfortunately the political grandstanding has endorsed their belief

and ensures the terrorists' continued bloody engagement until November

2008.

The bottom line, we need reinforcements to set the conditions for

success, and we need political support for the endurance to continue

this fight. That is from my friend in the battlefield.

And I say to my colleagues, the American people need better than

this. We need a plan of action for results and success in Iraq.

And I say, ``Madam Speaker, you have made your points. Now where is

your plan?''