Madam Speaker, the resolution we are debating today is

simple and direct. It declares strong support for our troops on the

ground in Iraq and opposition to the President's decision to send an

additional 21,000 men and women into harm's way. I wholeheartedly

endorse the resolution and pray that the President will heed its call.

Most agree now that it was a mistake to invade Iraq. Hearings in the

Senate and the House are stripping away the last thin veneers of

justification for that fateful decision. They are offering compelling

evidence that the administration sacrificed wisdom, judgment, and

conscience in favor of shock and awe.

Many of us sense a similar impulse at work in this administration's

dealings with Iran. Let us serve notice, this Congress will not allow

the administration to pursue yet another ill-fated mission. Madam

Speaker, bringing our troops home from Iraq is no longer a whispered

prayer; it is now the clarion call of the American people.

One year ago those proposing a new direction in Iraq were labeled as

unpatriotic and marginalized in the national discourse. But we have

come a long way. Elections do matter. On November 7, the people in my

district in Maryland and across the Nation sent a strong message.

The next day Secretary Rumsfeld resigned. Shortly thereafter the Iraq

Study Group issued its report sharply criticizing the war. And in the

next few days the United States House of Representatives will pass this

resolution signaling stiff opposition to the administration's proposal

for a troop surge in Iraq.

To those patriotic Americans who have been relentless in their call

for an end to the war, know this: collective voice has been heard. In

my home State of Maryland, nearly 400 men and woman have died or been

wounded in Iraq.

Two days ago, one of my constituents reminded me that the war is no

longer being measured in time, but in lives. To the families who have

sacrificed so much and who have suffered the ultimate loss, do not fear

for a moment that a change in our policy in Iraq, that the effort to

stop the escalation and begin drawing down our troops in any way

dilutes the value this country places on the service of your loved

ones.

History will treat harshly those policymakers at the highest levels

who let ideology trump sound and informed judgment. It will fairly

criticize politicians who have exploited this war for partisan gain.

But it will reserve only pride and lasting gratitude for the sacrifice

of our men and women in uniform amidst this sad tale of bungled

intelligence and ill-advised policy. They alone are untarnished.

Madam Speaker, I have never been to the war. Never kissed my wife and

children goodbye, wondering whether I will ever see them again. Far

from the harsh reality in Iraq, I am blessed with the sweet ebb and

flow of life's daily routines.

But like many Americans who witness our soldiers dutifully pushing

forward every day under impossible circumstances, I am ill at ease. I

know that the current policy in Iraq will only lead to more pain for

many families and for our country.

Madam Speaker, the American people are tired, they are tired of

rhetoric, they are tired of promises to put politics and partisanship

aside when all they see is bickering and recrimination. Let's give them

hope. Let's send a powerful message contained in this resolution, but

let's not stop there.

Let all of us, the President, the House, the Senate, have the decency

and dignity of purpose to put differences aside and work every day,

beginning this day, to bring our troops home to their families, to

their communities, and to a Nation that stands humbled by their

sacrifice