Madam Speaker, my name is Dr. Steve Kagen. I am from

Appleton, Wisconsin, and during the past 30 years I have cared for

thousands of military veterans as their physician.

The resolution under consideration today and voted on tomorrow will

answer these questions: What kind of Nation are we? In which direction

shall we move? During these past several days we have all benefited

from listening to hundreds of points of view from our elected

representatives from every region of this great country on our ongoing

involvement in Iraq.

During these past several months, I have been listening to the people

who sent me here from northeast Wisconsin, people a lot like you,

fiscally responsible and socially progressive, the citizens of

northeast Wisconsin.

People in Wisconsin, like many elsewhere, voted for a positive change

and a new direction. The new congressional class of 2006 has given us

hope again. We are indeed not just in name but in spirit America's

hope, and I am proud to be associated with these talented individuals.

I rise today in support of our troops and their families and to

encourage all of you to support this resolution. For it is the first

step in bringing an end to our costly involvement in a senseless civil

war between the Sunni and Shiite people.

Like every American, I strongly support our troops, but I cannot

support the President's poor judgment in promoting violence instead of

diplomacy. The President has been wrong in every decision he has made

in Iraq.

Indeed, on four separate occasions, prior escalations have failed.

And his current plan makes no sense even to the generals who understand

it most.

The reality is this, it was poor judgment that took us to war in the

first place. It is time to take a different course. For the path we are

on now is morally unacceptable. And here are the facts: more than

650,000 Iraq civilians dead; over 3,000 American heroes gone forever;

over 20,000 of our troops maimed for life, many with scars we will

never see, at an economic cost that may rise above $2 trillion.

Make no mistake, we must do whatever it takes to defend America and

keep hostilities from our shores. But what we need now is a tough and

smart national defense policy. It is time now to get the smart part

right.

This resolution has been criticized on both sides. Some say it is not

enough; some say it is too tough. But I am convinced it offers us the

opportunity to ask these questions again: What kind of Nation are we,

when a President takes us to war based on lies and deceptions, when our

energy policy is decided behind closed doors, and when in our free

elections not everyone's vote is counted?

What kind of Nation will we be when all of our manufacturing jobs are

taken overseas, when workers lose their rights to effective collective

bargaining, and when our government closes its eyes to global warming?

What kind of Nation are we and in which direction shall we move? Let's

begin now to work together and take a different path, a path where

people come first ahead of political parties, ahead of profit and loss

statements, ahead of politics of fear. When we put people ahead of

political calculations, we will begin to see a different world. We will

see that we must begin to solve our differences by means other than

going to war. After all, war is our greatest human failure.

This is not an idealistic sentiment, a realistic assessment of the

chronicle of horrors witnessed every day in Iraq, and even our own

experiences here at home, in New York City, in Virginia, in

Pennsylvania, in Oklahoma City.

We must teach our children and our leaders alike that in the end

diplomacy defeats violence. We must begin to think differently in

America as we establish a new direction for hope in the world and a new

beginning for our American era. By working together we will build a

better future for all of us, beginning right here and right now.

Like the new congressional class of 2006, America's hope, I strongly

support our troops, but not the President's failed policy. I encourage

all of my colleagues to join the class of 2006 and vote ``yes'' on this

important resolution. Join us. Be part of America's hope.