Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to the nonbinding

resolution being offered by the majority which, despite the rhetoric,

amounts to nothing more than a vote to maintain the status quo in Iraq.

This resolution offers no change from the recent course of events in

Iraq. It does not take into consideration the recommendations of the

bipartisan Iraq Study Group. It does not require the Iraqi people and

their elected leaders to step up and take responsibility for their own

future. It certainly does not set any benchmark that must be met by the

Iraqis. Most importantly, passage of this nonbinding resolution does

not protect the funding of our troops in Iraq and, according to many

Democrats, it is likely the first step in cutting off that funding

altogether.

Madam Speaker, we have spent 3 days debating a resolution that does

nothing more than serve as a vote of no confidence in the brave men and

women who are fighting for freedom and democracy in Iraq. Not only is

this resolution discouraging to our commanders and forces, it will fuel

the efforts of our enemies who are determined to spread terror and

suppress freedom.

Despite numerous attacks by terrorists on U.S. military and

diplomatic targets throughout the 1990s, Americans on September 11,

2001 awoke to the painful realization that we are engaged in a long-

term global war with terrorists, an international campaign to combat an

ideology that spreads hate and destruction.

Iraq is now the central front in this global war. Success in bringing

about a stable and democratic Iraq in the heart of the Middle East is a

goal that I believe we all share.

While the difficulties cannot be minimized, neither can the

consequences of failure and withdrawal. If we fail, the resources now

devoted by terrorist organizations and nations sponsoring terrorism in

Iraq will be turned to spreading terror around the globe including,

again, on American soil. Do not embolden them with this resolution.

The United States and our allies, in fact, all freedom-loving

peoples, need to support the popularly elected Iraqi Government in

establishing control over their country and providing a stable

environment for the Iraqi people and our troops as they assist in this

process. Together, we have made significant progress, despite numerous

obstacles.

Iraqis made history when they turned out in record numbers, despite

increased violence, to vote in the first free elections in over 50

years. Millions of Iraqis waved their purple-tipped fingers with pride

as they came out of the voting stations, a message to the world that

they chose freedom.

The President is the Commander in Chief and has the authority to make

decisions about the best way to accomplish our goals in Iraq. He has

initiated changes to our course in Iraq.

However, today we will not be voting for change. We will not be

voting for a comprehensive review of our strategy in Iraq. It is too

bad that when we all have concerns about how best to achieve success in

Iraq, the Democratic leadership has brought this polarizing and

political resolution to the floor to divide us, rather than unite us,

on the most serious question facing the country today.

For this reason, I urge my colleagues to vote against this nonbinding

resolution, which lacks any substance. I remind my colleagues that a

``no'' vote on this resolution is certainly not a rubber stamp for the

President's troop surge.

While I continue to support the mission in Iraq, I think it is clear

that the administration's efforts to achieve the mission have not been

flawless. But a vote against this resolution is a clear vote to support

our commanders and troops and all those who have lost their lives

spreading freedom to the people of Iraq.

I believe that more should be done to press the now established Iraqi

Government and U.S.-trained Iraqi military to take the lead. I believe

more can be done on the diplomatic front to engage the countries of the

Middle East to help.

But unfortunately, no such resolution offering concrete evidence has

been allowed, and this hollow process has resulted in a hollow

resolution.

I urge my colleagues to vote ``no.''