Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with you my belief that

we, as a people, are at a crossroads unlike any in our history. We have

seen our manufacturing-based economy assaulted by the forces of

globalization, the challenges of the ensuing revolution and energy

production squarely upon us, and we are at the dawning of a new

understanding, the fragileness of our environment. All of these things

are, in their own right, seminal concerns of a profound scale, but in

spite of the gravity and import of these issues, there is perhaps no

more compelling matter before us than that of the war in Iraq.

My colleagues on both sides of the aisle are distressed by the tragic

turns that this war has taken. I do not, at this moment, nor do my

colleagues, I presume, wish to draw upon the motivations or lack of

candor exhibited by our President in letting slip the dogs of war. But

I do long for leadership, leadership seasoned and honest enough to

admit when a mistake has been made, leadership that has a vision for

the future, leadership able to meld the inherent wisdom of man with the

realities of the modern world.

Under our form of government, it is the President who is singularly

endowed with this leadership; yet at this critical historical moment,

our call for leadership and inspiration has been unmet. As a result,

Mr. Speaker, I today voice my opposition to the President's plan to

deploy additional troops to Iraq.

The crisis that Iraq has become will not be resolved merely with

more, more, more, more troops, more tours and deployment extensions,

more injuries, more deaths. Simply providing more without a blueprint

is not enough. Without a clear plan and a clear objective, a troop

increase will not help our Iraq policy. In fact, it will only deepen

the disaster that Iraq has become.

I do not utter these thoughts lightly. I share these sentiments,

knowing that all of the people that I represent will not necessarily

agree with me. I fear that my remarks will be misconstrued as

reflecting something less than a full commitment to the brave men and

women who have served or are serving their country in uniform, or to

those heroes who have given their very lives for this cause.

Let there be no mistake, Mr. Speaker, I have at the very heart of my

motivation for these remarks a sincere appreciation for the sacrifice

of our brothers and sisters who have been dispatched to fight this war.

They, and their families by extension, have been called into action

under trying circumstances, and I am profoundly moved by their sense of

courage and dedication to country. In fact, it is my admiration and

respect for our brave warriors that motivate my decision to express my

dissatisfaction with the President's plan to subject more of them to

the ravages of war.

To date, over 3,000 Americans have fallen in this war. All of them

loved

their country enough to place themselves in harm's way in her defense.

All of them left behind their families, who will never stop grieving.

All of them have been deprived of the pleasures and privileges of a

full life, just as we who remain have been deprived of the

contributions to our society that each would have given.

Fifteen young men from Ohio's district have died in this war, all of

them were loved dearly. They are fathers, sons, brothers, and husbands.

Ohio's 18th is exclusively rural in makeup, dotted by one small town

and village after another. Our people are decent, hardworking, and

imbued with a strong sense of personal responsibility. Our community is

close knit and supportive. The death of each one of these brave

soldiers was met with a deep sense of communal grief.

This resolution stresses a message that many believed in. We support

our troops, we support their commitment to and sacrifice for our

Nation, we support their families and those of the fallen in their

silent and eternal heartache. We cannot fully understand their pain,

but perhaps we can learn from it.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot support a troop surge without real answers as

to how it will bring success in Iraq. I cannot support escalation

without regard to diplomacy, without regard to the political realities

of the region, and without regard to the underlying dynamics of this

conflict.

There is an unspoken pledge between a soldier of war and the

mechanisms of power. That warrior unquestioningly serves, defends and,

if need be, dies. In consideration, he expects his government to only

place him in harm's way when need be, and only through a painstakingly

thought-out plan for victory.

Our troops have fulfilled their pledge to our country. It is time

that our country fulfill its pledge to our troops.