Mr. Speaker, it literally breaks my heart to be here

today. Young Americans from my district have gone to Iraq and we have

lost some of our best, brightest soldiers. One of the finest men I ever

met, who I had the privilege of appointing to West Point, lost his life

in Iraq just last September. I feel responsible in part. We all are, in

part.

Very little has been asked of most Americans in this war, but too

much has been asked of a very few.

If anything comes from this debate, Mr. Speaker, I hope it is a

consensus for our responsibilities in this conflict. This House is

about different points of view, speech and debate, in an institution

that belongs to the people.

Our Nation is protected by the bravest of the brave, who leave their

homes and families to stand guard on foreign shores. Some of them are

the first in their families to wear the uniform of our country. Others

have done so for generations.

These young men and women hold dear connections to every town in

America. We are wrapping the fallen in our flag. They deserve the best

planning, the clearest execution, the utmost care in their deployments,

and heroes' welcomes when they return.

But it is not enough to give them parades. It is not enough to give

amputees the best VA care. Nor is it enough to bury them well. We

cannot allow their service to be undermined.

Congress and the administration have been locked in a struggle to

show the proper support very nearly from the beginning of this war.

Personnel armor, communications equipment, vehicle kits, the things

these Americans need, not for comfort but to preserve their lives amid

danger, have in some cases been supplied by soldiers' families and

others because the Department of Defense, which received $500 billion

last year, has run out. Supply-chain issues abound. Training has been

incomplete or insufficient for the new demands on our troops. I still

cannot discern a clear articulation of the mission of these men and

women in the field. I loathe revisiting these failures, but responsible

representation demands we do so.

Every American knows that America cannot do the work of Iraq's

natural allies. We cannot supplant Iraq's neighbors who depend on the

nation's viability for their own stability. We can be many things in

Iraq, but we cannot be all things to Iraq.

We can make good on our commitment to American troops serving in

Iraq, and here is how: We can offer them the support of a robust

American Diplomatic Corps to do jobs our soldiers should not have to do

and to avoid conflicts and enemies they should not have to engage.

We can secure funds for Iraq that guarantee our soldiers have the

gear and training they need to stay safe, and that means more than

writing the taxpayers' check. That means diligent, scrutinizing

oversight of how our money is spent.

We can assure that the deployment of American troops is deliberate in

every way.

We can offset the engagement of American troops far from home with

the engagement of Iraqi troops in their own cities and towns. We can

speed this transition by immediately securing Iraq's borders, by

providing aggressive training to Iraqi units and by lending our

expertise to building Iraqi institutions in addition to building the

Iraqi army. We can do these things, and we must.

We can do much more than debate a nonbinding resolution, one that

allows politics to creep into the question of support for our troops at

a time when our support must be complete and it must be unquestioned.

The liberation of Iraq means more than words and more than weapons.

Liberation needs diplomacy, libraries, schools and economic stability,

steady work and clean water, safe streets, as well as safe passage. The

measures of this progress must be widely known and the planners of this

war must be completely accountable.

Every day we do not define the terms of progress, we lay a grave

transgression at the feet of the mothers of the fallen, of the brothers

of the killed, of the soldiers who were just far enough away from the

IED that, when it exploded, they lost their limbs but not their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot lend my support to this resolution. It sets too

poor a precedent in this Congress when our standards for action must be

high. Words cannot replace deeds in support of our American troops.