Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I stand with the other members of my freshman class to

support this important resolution. My election and those of my fellow

freshman colleagues were an unmistakable signal from the American

people. They believe the President's path in Iraq is wrong and they

want new voices to produce change.

Mr. Speaker, I am one of those voices, and today I rise to speak with

the American people to oppose the President's escalation.

The United States requires a new path in Iraq, a path that will

deploy our troops out of Iraq; a path that will force the Iraqi

Government to plan for its own defense; a path that will engage

countries throughout the region and around the world to help stabilize

and protect Iraq; and a path that will allow the United States military

to rebuild and refocus on the important mission of destroying al Qaeda

and defending America from the threat of international terrorism.

Sadly, the escalation proposed by the President does none of these

things. The President's plan continues down the same path we have

traveled for the last 4 years. These years have taught us that U.S.

military power alone is not sufficient to stabilize Iraq, yet it is the

only tool this President employs.

From the outset, this administration has been wrong. The

administration led us into a war with flawed intelligence. That is one

wrong. The administration

went to war without a plan to win the peace. Two wrongs. This

administration chose to protect Iraqi oil fields before securing the

ammunition dumps throughout the country. Three wrongs. This

administration sent our troops into harm's way without enough body

armor or armored vehicles. Four wrongs. This administration gave no-bid

contracts to its friends and political allies. That is five wrongs.

Years ago now, President Bush stood on the deck of the USS Abraham

Lincoln before a banner declaring mission accomplished and said,

``Major combat operations in Iraq have ended.'' That is six wrongs.

Now, this administration wants us to blindly place our faith and the

lives of 20,000 more of our troops in an Iraqi Government that has

failed to meet every security obligation it has pledged. Sadly, once

again, this President is wrong, and no amount of wrongs is going to

make the President's policy towards Iraq right.

It is time for a new kind of escalation on the diplomatic front. A

stable Iraq is in the United States' interests and in the interests of

Iraq's neighbors. However, the President has done next to nothing to

gain the assistance of regional partners.

Inside Iraq, the government must meet its promises to reach out

beyond its base of support and unite the Iraqi people. Sending more

troops into Iraq does nothing to push the Iraqi Government towards

greater self-reliance. At a time when it is incumbent upon the Iraqi

Government to step up and do more, why should we give them the

opportunity to do less?

This resolution is an important first step that voices loud and clear

the message America sent last November, and it puts the President on

notice that the Congress will no longer stand by and allow him to

recklessly endanger American lives and security. If the President

refuses to change course, this Congress will be forced to act.

We will no longer allow him to send underequipped and underprepared

units into combat. We will demand appropriate accounting standards and

no longer allow billions of taxpayer dollars to disappear unaccounted

for into the rabbit hole of Iraq. And we must not let our National

Guard continue to be decimated by repeated and extended activation.

I recently met a young man from my district who has been accepted at

West Point and who will soon serve as a future leader in the United

States Army. I want to ensure that when he graduates from West Point

and accepts his commission, the Army he joins will not be decimated by

the mistakes in Iraq.

I also want to talk about the veterans of this war and the unique

challenges they will face. I am proud and honored to be on the

Veterans' Affairs Committee. I am proud that one of my first votes in

Congress was to provide an increase in VA health care funding.

Currently, there is a backlog of nearly 600,000 pending veterans

claims at the VA. We must reduce this number so that all veterans can

be better served. We must provide funding to better diagnose and treat

post-traumatic stress disorder. I am appalled that during this time of

war the administration would cut funding for research on prosthetic

technologies that will let our wounded veterans lead more normal lives.

My district is the home of West Point Military Academy and, as such,

has a unique perspective on the war. The leaders that emerge from the

halls of that institution are an invaluable resource for our Nation.

Sadly, we have lost over 50 West Point graduates in Iraq and others in

the services and throughout my district.

My brother-in-law is a lieutenant colonel who works at West Point. My

nephew is a cadet. The courage, devotion and conscientiousness of the

men and women of the United States Military Academy embody the best of

America.

In the words of the sheriff of Putnam County, a retired brigadier

general, one should never send our Armed Forces to do a job which is

not militarily achievable.

I support this resolution