Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues and certainly the people

from my home in south Alabama know, I do not often come to this floor,

either to hear my own voice or to offer some prophetic words of wisdom

on whatever the topic of the day happens to be.

My father often taught me that you learn a lot more from listening

than you do from talking. So in many ways, that is what I have been

doing the past few days, listening to my colleagues and thinking about

the consequences of the words that we are debating.

After a lot of listening to a lot of words, however, I find myself

compelled to come and say in the most direct way I know that I am

opposed to this nonbinding resolution. Let me say that again for that

is, after all, what we are talking about. This is a nonbinding

resolution. It is nothing more than a few words on a piece of paper,

and yet they are powerful words that have the potential of being

demoralizing and possibly even destructive.

Make no mistake that the resolution we are debating today does not

have the force of law behind it. So for those of you who are watching

at home, let us be clear. At a time when the President recognizes that

the situation in Iraq is unacceptable and it is clear that we need to

change our strategy, this resolution will not stop the deployment of a

single soldier or marine to Iraq, nor will it bring a single soldier or

marine home to their families or loved ones.

More importantly, this resolution does not offer any alternative

strategy. Nothing. Zip. It is silent with regard to our country's

ongoing efforts in fighting the global war on terror. Instead, it is

simply and unfortunately a method by which the House Democratic

majority is seeking to send a message to the President of the United

States.

But let us not kid ourselves. The words spoken in this Chamber this

week will travel much farther than the distance between this building,

the Capitol, and where the President lives, the White House. In

reality, these words will travel far beyond our shores, across the

globe to the 140,000 men and women who are currently deployed in Iraq

and engaged in but one part, admittedly an important part, of the

global war on terror and the Islamic militant extremists we are

fighting.

I know we have heard Democrat after Democrat and a few Republicans,

to be fair, come to this floor and say, we support our troops and we

support this resolution; but with all due respect, I find it totally

inconsistent to say you support our troops and at the same time you

support this resolution.

How can we really expect our soldiers to have the will to succeed

when this body as a whole does not have the resolve to stand by them

and their mission? Do we think our troops do not listen to what is

being said here in Washington and around the country? During my visits

to Iraq, I found just the opposite to be the case.

So while the underlying message of this resolution is intended for

the President, it is only logical to ask who else might be listening.

What about the families of these soldiers who are anxiously awaiting

their safe return home. Make no mistake, they will hear this message

loud and clear.

And then there is the very real chance that the families of the

thousands of Alabama National Guard members who have been deployed to

Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the families of all active and Reserve

forces, will read the glaring subtext of this resolution and hear the

people's House signaling that we will not be able to prevail in Iraq,

the cause is lost, and their loved one's sacrifice is for naught.

Unfortunately, the words of this resolution will also travel to the

ears of our enemies. And what could be better news for our enemies than

that America is divided, an America that does not have the will to

succeed.

On this topic, let's look to the man who knows the enemy in Iraq

better than anyone, General David Petraeus. You remember General

Petraeus; he just received an overwhelming vote of confidence when he

was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate to command our

forces in Iraq. At his confirmation hearing, General Petraeus was asked

if a congressional resolution disapproving the deployment of additional

troops would encourage the enemy. His response was direct and

unequivocal. ``That is correct, sir.''

Let me say that again. General Petraeus, our commander in the ground

on Iraq, believes that a resolution disapproving the deployment of

additional troops, which is what we are debating today, will encourage

our enemy.

He went on to say that this is a test of wills, and at the end of the

day a commander in such an endeavor would obviously like the enemy to

feel that there is no hope. But instead of saying there is no hope to

the enemy, we are saying there is no hope to the American soldier and

the American people.

Let's not forget that our words as well as our actions do have

consequences. Vote ``no'' on this resolution.