I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a statement that mistakes have been made

in Iraq. The status quo is not acceptable. We need to chart a new

course. But we also need to acknowledge that some positive things have

happened in Iraq, thanks to the courage and dedication of our troops.

These accomplishments often get just lost in all the politics that

surround this debate.

Toppling one of the most brutal dictators in history was a good

thing. Saddam Hussein's regime was responsible for the senseless murder

of thousands of innocent Iraqi citizens. Under his rule, most Iraqis

lived in fear of the day Hussein or one of his cronies would come for

their mother, their father, their sister or brother.

Hussein was also a direct threat to our friend and ally, Israel. He

was a menace, and it is good that he is gone. Furthermore, turning

Iraq's sovereignty over to the Iraqis and providing assistance as they

forged a democratically elected government is a big deal. Fostering

democracy in the

heart of the Middle East was important and was also a very historic

moment.

As we debate the current strategy in Iraq, let us not forget that our

soldiers have provided a tremendous opportunity to the Iraqi people.

They have provided an opportunity for them to grab the benefits of

freedom. Now it is up to the Iraqis to seize it.

Before us today, we have a nonbinding resolution that doesn't even

mention the accomplishments I just spoke of. We can all agree that the

war has taken a wrong turn, but instead of debating nonbinding

resolutions that have no bearing on whether additional troops go to

Iraq, we should work together to find a solution that results in our

soldiers coming home in victory, not defeat.

Mr. Speaker, I have offered my conditional support for the

President's plan for additional troops in Iraq. My support is

conditional, not carte blanche. I want to see the benchmarks met and

progress made within the next 90 to 120 days. It is time for the Iraqis

to step up to the plate and assume responsibility for the security of

their nation.

If the Iraqis do not step up to this challenge in the coming months,

then it will be time to reevaluate. The resolution before us doesn't

even speak to these issues. It does nothing in the way of bringing out

or bringing our troops home quickly and in victory. It is just pure

politics.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work together

with the President to ensure a quick return of our troops. We all know

that Congress is not going to cut funding for President Bush's new Iraq

plan. If we know this to be true, why are we wasting our time on

nonbinding resolutions that lead us nowhere?

Let's put our troops first. Let's end the political gamesmanship, and

let's work together to find a solution in Iraq. That is what the

American people want, and that is what our soldiers and their families

deserve.