I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, like many Americans I am frustrated and dissatisfied

with the situation in Iraq. I did not take my vote lightly when

Congress authorized the President to use force. Every day I think about

the patriotism and sacrifice of our brave men and women who are serving

courageously in harm's way.

Mistakes and the complexity of events along the way have led us to

the place we are today. Sectarian violence has increased, and Iraq is

mired in a civil war, making it difficult for the new government to

take hold.

While our role in this conflict has become a divisive issue, there is

no denying the significant consequences Iraq's future will have for

national and international security and stability.

So I must ask, how do we move forward in a way that honors the

commitment and tremendous sacrifices our Nation and its troops have

made? We can do so neither by cutting off funding for the troops nor by

providing the President with a blank check.

Instead of political posturing, we must insist on a surge in

diplomacy. I believe we need to follow closely the recommendations made

by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group to bring about the best possible

outcome. The Iraq Study Group report states, and I quote:

The United States should immediately launch a new diplomatic

offensive to build an international consensus for stability in Iraq and

the region.

This diplomatic effort should include every country that has an

interest in avoiding a chaotic Iraq, including all of Iraq's neighbors.

Given the ability of Iran and Syria to influence events

within Iraq, the United States should try to engage them

constructively.

By doing so, it would help marginalize extremists and terrorists,

promote U.S. values and interests, and improve America's global image.

States included within the diplomatic offensives can play a major role

in reinforcing national reconciliation efforts between Iraq, Iraqi

Sunnis and Shia. Such reinforcement would contribute substantially to

legitimatizing of the political process in Iraq.

Iraq's leaders may not be able to come together unless they receive

the necessary signals and support from abroad. This backing will not

materialize of its own accord, and it must be encouraged urgently by

the United States. We should make it clear to the Iraqi leadership that

the additional troops are solely for the purpose of achieving

stability, and that this deployment is a precursor to our leading the

future of this Nation to the Iraqi people. And I would emphasize this

is the important process.

Troop increases alone will not solve the fundamental cause of

violence in Iraq if its government is not committed to a national

reconciliation process.

However, as we lead a surge in diplomacy, and the Iraqi Government

accelerates its efforts at national reconciliation, the Iraq Study

Group report makes clear, and I quote, ``The United States should

significantly increase the number of U.S. military personnel, including

combat troops, embedded in and supporting Iraqi Army units. As these

actions proceed, we could begin to move combat forces out of Iraq.''

Denying additional troops, as requested by our military leadership,

could put our troops that are there at greater risk and delay their

return to their loved ones. I hear from my constituents who want our

troops home immediately and from those who want us to remain there so

we don't have to fight the terrorists on our own soil.

What I do know is that the challenges in Iraq are complex, and the

consequences of immediate withdrawal would be devastating. The Iraq

Study Group report goes on to say ``The global standing of the United

States could be diminished.'' Our Nation has sacrificed far too much to

allow our credibility and values to be weakened.

I cannot, in good faith, support this nonbinding resolution. We also

support the troops, and we all want to bring the troops home as quickly

as possible.

Let us instead urge the President to increase diplomatic efforts and

to follow the recommendations made by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group

to work on many fronts to solve the challenges in Iraq.