Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the

time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this nonbinding

resolution. I cannot support it for it neither supports our troops nor offers an

alternative plan. It is symbolic, it is partisan, it is cynical, and it

is meaningless.

The leadership of this body is taking the easy route: criticize the

other guy's plan but don't offer your own. Call up your own nonbinding

resolution, but don't allow votes on resolutions that actually have

substance. Position yourselves for the next elections but not for the

next wave of terrorism attacks. Win the White House, but lose the war

on terror.

There is no doubt that the voters spoke in the last election. They

are not happy with the war. Few, if any of us, are satisfied with the

progress made in Iraq. I know I am not. Neither are my constituents.

Their patience and that of all Americans has run thin.

For too long we pursued an open-ended commitment without well-defined

goals and clear benchmarks for success. We also pursued a strategy that

placed too heavy a burden on our troops and too light an expectation of

the Iraqi Government. But I want to remind my colleagues that the

voters will speak again if we don't get this right. And I say ``we''

because it is all of us. If we don't put aside the partisan positioning

and work together for the good of this country, we all will lose more

than just our seats in this body.

It is not enough to point the finger and say that the President is

wrong, and wait for the returns to come in. It is not enough to

disapprove and criticize and say It is not my job. He is the Commander

in Chief. And it is not enough to turn around and through this

resolution say you support troops that have been or are serving in

Iraq, but not those who may go in as replacements, rotations, or as

part of the new temporary deployment. This is why we should be using

this opportunity, not to take a symbolic vote of no confidence in our

Commander in Chief, but to discuss real options for the way forward in

Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I have been there several times. I have been to the red

zone, visited the convention center where the Iraqi Parliament meets,

and was there as Prime Minister Maliki presented his reconciliation

plan. I met with our military commanders. I have listened to our

soldiers who patrol the streets in Baghdad, and I have talked with

democratically elected Iraqi leaders about their hopes for the future.

The one thing that was very clear to me is that only the Iraqi

Government can take the tough steps that will achieve reconciliation

and an end to sectarian violence.

So now Prime Minister Maliki has stepped forward and asked our

President for specific assistance in securing Baghdad. In response,

President Bush's commanders have drawn up a plan. The President

proposed a new commander on the ground, General Petraeus, who was

confirmed by the other body in a bipartisan, unanimous vote of 81-0.

We urged the creation of a bipartisan Iraqi Study Group comprised of

our country's most distinguished and seasoned experts and asked their

advice. Among the key items they supported was a temporary surge in

troop strength if called for by the commanders on the ground. ``As

Baghdad goes, so goes Iraq,'' they pointed out.

These are all steps in the right direction. But what would approving

this resolution signal to the world? That we tell the Iraqi people to

take the tough steps, but then we deny them the support they need to do

so? That we urge the creation of a bipartisan commission to give us

guidance and then reject its advice? That we unanimously confirm a new

general on the ground and then we deny him his plan? That we support

our troops, but not their replacements?

These are not the messages that I want to send. We owe it to our

troops and to those who have given their lives to give the Iraqis one

last chance to show that they are willing to fight for and take

responsibility for the future of their own country. But we have to

exercise our constitutional powers and hold them to it, and we have to

stop signaling that the best Congress can offer is a big, nonbinding

``no'' to someone else's plan.

So today I am cosponsoring legislation, H.R. 1062, that will do just

that: hold the administration, and the Iraqi Government, accountable in

achieving clear benchmarks. It requires the President to report to

Congress every 30 days on the extent to which the government of Iraq is

moving forward on more than a dozen fronts, from troop training and

security to rebuilding, reconciliation, international cooperation, and

enforcing the rule of law. It also requires progress reports on the

implementation of strategies that will prevent Iraqi territory from

becoming a safe haven for terrorist activities.

Most significantly, H.R. 1062 exercises the full constitutional

powers of this body, not through a symbolic expression of discontent,

but through vigorous oversight and true accountability.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1062 and reject the resolution

before us.