I thank you, Chairman Reyes, of the Intelligence

Committee.

Madam Speaker, this resolution before the House today is very clear:

Congress and the American people support our troops who serve bravely

in Iraq, and Congress disapproves of President Bush's decision to send

an additional 20,000 troops to Iraq.

There is not a Member of this body who does not pray for our Nation's

success in Iraq and in the global war on terror. Our brave servicemen

and women have performed in Iraq with valor and honor. They have done

everything that a grateful Nation has asked of them since the beginning

of the war.

Whether you are for or against the war, we must support our troops.

This resolution does that.

The only people sacrificing in this war are the troops and their

families. Many military personnel have served two and three tours of

duty. It has been difficult on their families here at home. More than

3,100 of our finest sons and daughters have given the ultimate

sacrifice for their country. More than 25,000 troops have been wounded.

I do not believe we need new troops in Iraq. I believe we need a new

strategy in Iraq. The current strategy is clearly not working.

We have increased the number of American troops in the past, and it

has not done anything to calm the violence. In fact, in certain

circumstances the violence has increased. Even General Abizaid,

commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East has stated, ``More American

forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more

responsibility for their own future.'' I completely agree with him.

I serve on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; I

have been to Iraq four times and have met with America's top generals,

U.S. and Iraqi troops, and Iraqi elected officials. We must give the

Iraqis more responsibility to take control of their own country. We

must cut the apron strings and let the Iraqis patrol their own streets.

American troops will guard the perimeter areas and back up the Iraqis

in an emergency. I call this the Perimeter Plan.

Redeploying troops to perimeter areas, the Green Zone, and lowering

the profile of American forces will break the dependency the Iraqi

military has on U.S. forces.

The Iraqis will gain more confidence in their own ability to secure

their own country, and we will begin bringing our men and women home.

It has been said by my friends on the other side of the aisle that

the Democrats don't have a plan. That is not true. Other Members of our

party have a plan and I have a plan. In fact, I shared the Perimeter

Plan with the President and members of his Cabinet on two occasions at

the White House. I also gave a copy of the Perimeter Plan to the Iraqi

Study Group that reviewed it before issuing its recommendations that

have been largely ignored by the President. This is not cut and run

like some on the other side of the aisle would like you to believe. It

is a way to force the Iraqis to take more control of their country,

while also allowing the U.S. military to do what it does best.

We have some of the best operations forces, Marines and Rangers, and

the best technology in the world. These forces can focus on backing up

the Iraqi military.

As Thomas Payne insisted during the American Revolution: ``We need to

let those who want independence test their will and try their soul.''

More American troops hinder the Iraqi democracy from testing its soul,

and hurt the world in the global war on terror. More than $400 billion

has been spent on this war by American taxpayers with little or no

oversight by Congress. From the invasion of Iraq and the start of the

war, a Republican House and Republican Senate have given the President

almost whatever he wanted both in money and strategic resources. The

days of the blank check are over. The stakes are too high to allow this

money and resources to be spent unchecked.

In the first 6 weeks of this new Congress, the Democrats have held 52

House and Senate hearings on Iraq. We are conducting oversight and

holding the administration accountable.

Iraq was not a hotbed for terrorists before the war, but it is now.

The country has become a magnet for those who want to harm Americans

and Iraqis and disrupt a new democracy. Terrorists have used Iraq

against us to recruit and spread their twisted ideology worldwide.

But the global war on terror is much more than Iraq. While we are

spending much of our precious resources in Iraq, we are not focused on

fighting terrorism worldwide. We are taking our eye off the ball. We

must refocus our efforts on other parts of the Middle East, Asia, South

America, Africa, and other parts of the world. Good intelligence is the

best defense against terrorism. This takes resources. We must

prioritize where we put our money. It is not about Republicans or

Democrats. It is about all Americans and keeping this country safe for

our children and our grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, this is a critical moment in the war in Iraq. More

troops will not help Iraq. A new strategy will.

Democracy is rooted in independence and self-sustainment. By

implementing the Perimeter Plan, we encourage the Iraqis to take

control of their own country. This strategy will allow us to be

successful in Iraq and win the war on terror. This is why we must vote

for this resolution. I urge Members to support it