Madam Speaker, I want the American

men and women serving in Iraq to come home. I want this war to end. I

want the violence to stop, the injuries to stop, the deaths to stop,

and I also want terrorism to stop.

Over the last few weeks, many of my constituents told me these same

feelings, their strong feelings in support of or against this

resolution.

I hear your concerns. No one can doubt your love of your country.

Like you, I am deeply concerned about the direction of this war. Like

you, armed with the knowledge of the present, the strategies of the

past were too often incomplete. The intelligence was misinterpreted or

inadequate.

The comments made here today on this resolution will be listened to

by Iraqis and al Qaeda and the soldiers in the field right now, the

marines on the high seas headed that way, and the thousands who already

are on the offensive. Here is my message to them: Arab countries have

told us that if we left now the results would be catastrophic. I want

those Arab countries to impress upon the Sunnis and the Shias the

absolute need to work for peace now. I want the United States to

actively engage in diplomatic efforts with all Arab nations. There is

no more time for delay. I want the Iraqi military to step up and take

over combat operations, to be the tip of the spear, and for our troops

to shift our mission to training and support. I want to see the Iraqi

Government stand strong where every group feels respected and protected

and all feel they have a future of hope.

There is no time for delay.

I also want Republicans and Democrats to sit down together and

discuss how to make these things come to fruition. I want us to review

the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, to talk about

which recommendations are worthy of implementation. I want us to

thoughtfully, carefully and responsibly discuss not only what action we

should take in Iraq, but to weigh the full consequences of any action

and to offer real ideas, real strategies and real solutions.

I want this Congress to support our soldiers, every one of them; to

tell them we value them and pray for them and their families and will

give them what they need to do their job. I want all of them to know

that we will stand with them until the last one returns home. And I

want them to know that policy comes before politics, and that no poll,

no political plan, no political threat should ever undermine our

allegiance to doing what is right for our soldiers and our Nation. I

want them to know that their work, their risks, their fighting, has

meaning and purpose, and must be immune to the politics of Washington.

I want the soldiers and airmen from the 171st, the 99th and the 911th

in Pittsburgh, and all our National Guard and Reservists and active

duty to come home. I want their families to be able to embrace them,

their children to be tucked in at night by them and our towns to be

able to show the affection of a grateful Nation. But while they are

there, while they stand sentry with eyes on the horizon, ride in their

convoys or walk on patrol, I want their minds on the critical task of

that moment.

I spoke this week to the mother of a soldier who was just killed in

Iraq, Russell Kurtz. A finer and a braver man you will not find. I

asked her what she thought about this discussion of sending more troops

to Iraq, and she said, ``I would rather have more troops there helping

my son.''

Dom DeFranco, the Pennsylvania Commander of the VFW, wrote this

letter to the editor of the Almanac Newspaper. I will submit the whole

letter, but let me read this. He said, ``Even with their pride, honor

and dedication motivating them patrol after patrol, bad morale can

bring down even the toughest warrior. As a Vietnam veteran, trust me,

it cuts deep. Regardless of where you stand on the current war on

terror, troops get the message that they are wasting their time when

politicians and citizens make headlines criticizing military action.''

Madam Speaker, I include the entire letter for the Record.

Madam Speaker, listen to this comment from the American Legion

regarding their unanimous support for the current action in Iraq and

the increase in troops and their caution or political rhetoric. They

said, ``Veterans of the Vietnam were remember what it was like to fight

without the support of the people back home. You couldn't separate the

war from the warrior then, any more than we can today.''

While our soldiers are there, I will support them with everything

they need in terms of armor and ammunition, bullets and bread, weapons

and words.

I will continue to work for all of these things, but for this point

in time, while our soldiers are on the battlefield, I want to be able

to look them in the eye and say at your moment of need, I backed you up

on the battlefield.