Madam Speaker, I support the resolution before us today.

In clear and succinct language it says what I believe must be said

regarding the war in Iraq that America is engaged in by the choice of

President Bush.

I support our men and women on the front line with all the training,

the body and vehicle armor and the equipment they need to be successful

at the task that they have been given, and I support them as they

return, whether safe and sound or scarred by grievous wounds. Almost

24,000 have been wounded, and many returned broken in body or spirit.

Many have suffered permanently disabling wounds. Thousands of others,

not physically wounded, suffer severe traumatic stress disorders. And

all will need and must be given the care and rehabilitation they have

been promised.

America mourns the loss of more than 3,000 of our soldiers since that

fateful first day of May in 2003 when President George W. Bush

triumphantly proclaimed ``Mission Accomplished.'' At no time in the 220

years since the founding of our Nation has America suffered such

casualties during an occupation following war. This occupation has been

spectacularly mismanaged, yet Americans are asked to suspend doubt and

support an already used tactic, placing almost 20,000 additional troops

on the ground around the clock, with our young men and women caught

between the combatants in the civil war raging in Baghdad's urban

streets and neighborhoods.

I oppose this escalation. It is 4 years too late and more than

100,000 troops too few. The tactic itself has been used repeatedly over

the last 4 years, with dangerously counterproductive results. Each time

this tactic has been used, it has left behind greater hatred for the

occupation and the occupiers, as well as thousands of new recruits for

the insurgency or al Qaeda. I believe that this escalation will be

remembered for the deaths of many more American soldiers and Iraqi

civilians.

President George W. Bush has repeatedly cited the 300,000 strong

Iraqi army and police force which we have spent billions of dollars to

train and equip. They should be pacifying their capital city. As

dysfunctional as it is, the Iraqi government which we created must

decide whether they want all-out civil war or a stable, unified Iraq,

with oil revenues fairly distributed and with changes to their

Constitution to assure the rights of 40 percent of the population who

are not Shia Muslims. We cannot decide that for them.

The civil war will continue and our casualties will continue to mount

until we disengage our forces from a direct military role, except to

deny haven to al Qaeda. We must place responsibility directly on the

Iraqi government.

At this very late date, virtually everyone agrees that peace and

stability for Iraq cannot be secured militarily, but only politically.

Our best chance for a positive outcome to this tragic and unnecessary

war is outlined and unanimously recommended by the Iraq Study Group,

led by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Congressman Lee

Hamilton.

We should substitute a robust, multifaceted diplomatic campaign to

discourage all of Iraq's neighbors from engagement in the growing civil

war and to gain support and assistance for a stable, unified Iraq. That

diplomatic campaign must involve major powers and regional groups like

the European Union and the Arab league, along with all of Iraq's

neighbors, without exception or precondition. The U.S. should always be

willing to talk. In every way, talk is far less costly than war.

In a month, the war in Iraq will have gone on 4 years, well beyond

our participation in World War II. It is time to begin bringing our

troops home.