Madam Speaker, the situation we are

facing in Iraq right now is serious. The resolution we are debating

here tonight, unfortunately, is not.

Everyone agrees the situation on the ground is unacceptable. To make

it right, we need leadership, resources, and resolve. What we don't

need is 36 hours of time trading speeches on a nonbinding measure, a

measure that imparts no new policy, offers no new alternatives, and

commands no real effect.

Most of the speeches I have heard this week are about the war. On

that subject, there is plenty of room for disagreement. But the

resolution before us isn't about the war, it is about a specific

tactical question: the number of troops we need to deploy to finish the

job.

I can't think of a group that is less qualified to make strategic and

tactical decisions on the ground than 535 Members of Congress, sitting

6,000 miles away on Capitol Hill. Congress shouldn't be in the business

of micromanaging war tactics.

Should we debate the war in Iraq? Certainly. Can we disagree about

its goals and purpose? Absolutely. But decisions on the ground need to

be determined by our military commanders on the scene, and not public

opinion polls.

Of course, the other responsibility of Congress is, when it comes to

wars, the power to fund them. As a member of the Appropriations

Committee, I take that responsibility seriously. But if my colleagues

on the Appropriations Committee and in the full House think the war is

a lost cause, if they think that sending more troops to help secure

Iraq is the wrong strategy, they shouldn't hesitate to cut off the

funding for the operation. I wouldn't support that measure, but at

least it would be a measure of genuine intent, not a two-paragraph

statement on military tactics we have on the floor this week.

Mistakes have been made. But this is a mission that is consistent

with our vital interest and worthy of our support. I don't believe

President Bush has prosecuted this war flawlessly, and, frankly, I

don't believe he has always particularly been well advised. But this

strategy of reinforcement is not always supported by the President, it

is supported by the military and the political leadership of Iraq.

People have to understand something. We are facing an enemy like no

other we have faced before, an ideological enemy driven by hate, not

reason; an enemy for whom there can be no rest until the freedoms and

values that define our civilization are destroyed.

Victory is the only outcome that can be accepted. But the resolution

we are debating on the floor this week was not written with ultimate

victory in mind; it was written in expectation of defeat. And, unlike

some of my colleagues, I am not willing to concede to defeat.

So many families have sacrificed so that we can be successful in

Iraq, and they are willing to sacrifice even more. To cut support for

them now would be unforgiveable.

You know, Mr. Speaker, watching the debate on the floor this week, my

thoughts keep going back to the Loudon family who live in my district.

Their son Christopher, a member of his college ROTC program, was

deployed to Iraq after graduation and came home this fall in a flag-

draped coffin.

Their son Nicholas is a West Point graduate I nominated to the

Academy, who served with his brother in Iraq, and he is heading back to

Iraq this weekend for another tour of duty.

Their son Jonathan, their youngest, and another one of my Academy

nominees, is going to West Point this fall. The Loudon family had great

concern over whether to send their third and youngest son to West

Point. In the end, they were swayed by their son's commitment to serve

his country and their shared belief that his mission is one worth

fighting for.

If the Loudons can remain strong and committed in the face of the

most difficult circumstances any family can endure, why can't Congress?

I have gotten other calls from families in my district. One mother

called this week to tell me that her son, a young man named Nathan

Stone whom I nominated to West Point in 2001, is currently serving in

south Baghdad, sweeping the city, going door to door, risking his life

so the Iraqis can live their lives with a basic security. And do you

know what he told his mother to relate to me? He told her that they are

making a difference, they are seeing progress. They need help, they

need these troops, and they will be excited when they get them.

If First Lieutenant Stone believes that these additional troops are

vital to him completing his mission in Baghdad, that tells me a lot.

And if the Loudons can send their youngest son to West Point knowing

that he may some day be called into service himself, that tells me all

I need to know.

Mr. Speaker, no one likes war. No one wants our troops to be in Iraq

one minute longer than they have to be to ensure the mission is

accomplished. Reasonable people may disagree on strategy, but this

resolution is not about alternative viewpoints. There are no different

courses offered, no suggestions, and no responsibility taken.

I stand with the Loudon family and Lieutenant Stone, and vote opposed

to this resolution.