I thank the gentleman.

We are debating a simple, straightforward resolution. Clause 1 says,

``Congress and the American people will continue to support and protect

the members of the United States Armed Forces who are serving or have

served bravely and honorably in Iraq.''

Every Member of Congress, despite outrageous allegations from the

Republican side of the aisle from some, fully supports our troops and

wants them to have the best equipment available to accomplish this

mission. The disagreement is over the strategy that determines their

mission.

The Republicans don't want to have a debate over that strategy. They

are trying to conflate support for the troops with support for the

President's failed stay-the-course strategy dressed up with a little

bit of escalation.

But as President Theodore Roosevelt said during World War I, standing

by a President, whether right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and

servile, it is morally treasonable to the American public.

Supporting the troops doesn't require supporting the failed policies

of this President and his administration. The Republicans don't want to

debate the conduct of the war and the future strategy in Iraq. The

former Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Peter

Hoekstra, wrote a letter to his colleagues saying, ``This debate should

not be about the surge or its details. This debate should not even be

about the Iraq war to date, mistakes that have been made, or whether we

can or cannot win militarily. If we let the Democrats force us into a

debate on the surge or the current situation in Iraq, we lose.''

So change the subject. Make things up.

There is a massive propaganda effort on the part of many Republicans

to distract and dissemble. They have trotted out the tired and

thoroughly discredited catch phrase, ``If we don't fight them there, we

will fight them here,'' invoking the specter of Osama bin Laden and al

Qaeda. However, U.S. intelligence agencies, including military

intelligence agencies, have refuted that claim that the conflict in

Iraq is driven by al Qaeda. It is not. The violence is driven by a

civil war primarily between the Iraqi Sunnis and Shias in a 1,400-year-

old conflict, and our troops are caught in the middle of that civil

war. The recent National Intelligence Estimate definitively put that

issue to rest. The Iraqi Sunnis and Shias have no interest in or

capability of attacking the United States.

Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, and their Taliban allies are still alive

and active on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, thanks to the

Bush administration and the massive diversion of our troops and

resources from Afghanistan to an unnecessary war in Iraq. We do need to

reinforce our troops in Afghanistan in order to end, once and for all,

the threat posed by al Qaeda and the Taliban leadership.

Our Nation and our troops were led into the war in Iraq by the

distortion of intelligence, dissembling by the President, and senior

members of the administration. It is time for the truth. The Bush

administration has saddled our troops with a failed strategy in Iraq.

It is that failed strategy that hurts our troops, not the words of

those of us who have pointed out the obvious failures by this

administration.

I don't believe there is a level of U.S. troops that could stabilize

Iraq at this point and resolve these underlying ages-old sectarian

conflicts.

The President remains optimistic. However, optimism is not a

strategy. Staying the course and repeating the failures of the past is

not a new strategy. Vice President Dick Cheney, despite the grim

National Intelligence Estimate acknowledging the civil war in Iraq,

dismissed suggestions that Iraq is a disaster, saying, ``The reality on

the ground is that we have made major progress.'' Vice President

Cheney.

Optimism, stay the course, and delusion and denial, those do not

serve our troops well. We need a real change in strategy.

A better strategy is to announce a time line negotiated with the

Iraqi Government to bring our troops home over the next 6 months to a

year.

The administration has always set time lines for political

developments in Iraq, for the elections, for the drafting of the

constitution. The administration argued such time lines were necessary

to focus the energy of Iraq's leaders and to force compromises. We need

to do the same on the military side. Negotiating a time line for

bringing home U.S. troops with responsible parties in the Iraqi

Government would boost the Iraqi Government's legitimacy and claim to

self-rule, and force the Iraqi Government to take responsibility for

itself and its citizens. Negotiating a withdrawal timeline and strategy

with the Iraqi Government could more than possibly anything else

improve the standing of the Iraqi Government in the eyes of its own

people, a significant achievement in a region where the standing of

rulers and governments is low, and it could also abate the insurgencies

of both Sunnis and Shias. Too many Iraqis view us as an occupying

force. Large majorities of both Sunnis and Shia want U.S. troops to

withdraw, and approve of attacks on our men and women in uniform.

The U.S. must engage, despite the reluctance of this administration,

in robust diplomacy with all factions in Iraq, except the foreign

terrorists and domestic al Qaeda elements and work with Iraq's

neighbors in an effort to bring about political reconciliation among

Sunnis, Shias and Kurds. Our troops have done all that has been asked

of them in Iraq.

Saddam Hussein is dead. His allies are on the run or in prison. The

threat from WMDs is nonexistent. The war that has been authorized by

Congress is won. The troops should come home. Congress should not

authorize U.S. troops to referee a civil war in Iraq.