Madam Speaker, on November 19 of 1863, President Abraham

Lincoln rose on the platform at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, following a

2-hour oration by Edward Everett, and gave a brief but very eloquent

discourse that has become a prominent

part of our country's heritage. At the dedication of the Gettysburg

National Cemetery he acknowledged, ``The world will little note nor

long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did

here. It is, for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the

unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly

advanced.''

Can we find some poignancy today in those simple words uttered 7

score and 4 years ago? What is the unfinished work that confronts this

body politic, and more to the point, does this resolution promulgated

unilaterally by the majority advance the cause for freedom for which

3,000 of our countrymen have given the last full measure of devotion?

For all of these rhetorical meanderings that have occurred lo these

many hours, the responsibility for the current state of affairs in Iraq

rests squarely with the majority of Members who serve in this Congress

of the United States. Back on December 17, 1998, do you recall House

Resolution 612 which declared in pertinent part, ``Resolved, by the

House of Representatives that . . . the Congress reaffirms that it

should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove

the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power' and to promote the

emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime.'''

I note that the gentleman who just spoke, along with 400 other

Members of the Congress, supported that resolution as the policy of the

United States, and thereafter in October of 2002, Congress, both the

House and the Senate, approved the resolution approving the use of

force and military action necessary to effectuate that policy of regime

change.

Now, deposing the former dictator, in relative terms, was the easy

part, yanking him from his hiding place, a hole in the ground. He

eventually stood trial in the dock as a common accused, was judged by

his countrymen according to the rule of law, and held to account for

the brutality of his many crimes.

A second policy objective, promoting a democratic government has been

the harder path, but though difficult, is it no less important? As my

friend and colleague, my classmate from New Mexico (Mrs. Wilson) so

passionately and persuasively annunciated yesterday, America has vital

national interests in Iraq.

Does anyone argue the contrary? Can we not all agree that we must

deny al Qaeda sanctuary in Iraq? Do we not further agree that Iraq must

not be the source of instability in the Middle Eastern region?

Well, if we can agree on these points, can the majority make a

legitimate case that this resolution accomplishes either of those

important interests? President Bush recently nominated General David

Petraeus as the new Commander of Multinational Forces in Iraq. Widely

known as a brilliant tactician in the area of counterinsurgency,

General Petraeus was unanimously confirmed by the other body.

Today, however, the majority desires to deny this extremely capable

commander the means to accomplish his objective. Isn't it incumbent

upon us, as Lincoln urged, to remain dedicated to the task remaining

before us? Haven't many in this body expressed frustration that the

Iraqi Government has put limitations on the rules of engagement of our

troops in our field, not allowing our military to hunt down the enemy

because insurgents had escaped to a safe haven in a region deemed off-

limits by the Iraqi Government?

Well, isn't the majority party doing exactly the same thing half a

world away with this resolution? Isn't denying military additional

reinforcements deemed necessary by our generals in the field hampering

our last best chance for success?

Two nights ago I was moved by the quiet eloquence of the

distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. McHugh) when he made the

simple yet ironic observation: At no time in our Nation's history has

this House considered a public rebuke of a sitting Commander in Chief

for the manner in which a war has been conducted that Congress itself

has authorized.

On that score alone, I find this resolution breathtaking in its

audacity. If I may be allowed to paraphrase the Great Emancipator, it

is true, the world will little note nor long remember what we say here,

but the world will never forget what we do here.

I urge rejection of this resolution.