Thank you for yielding.

Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to see you in the Chair tonight.

I would like to thank the new leadership in the House tonight for the

opportunity and the time to allow this body and the Members of this

body to go on record about the President's war strategy.

Of course I would prefer that we were debating my bill, H.R. 413,

which would rescind the authority that we gave the President to invade

Iraq back in October of 2002. I voted against this war then, and I will

continue to do so now.

We just cannot thank, though, our leadership. We have to thank the

American people, the people that went to the polls in November, who

voted for a change and a new direction for this country. You, our

constituents, voted for this change, and now you are witnessing the

historic debate on the President's policy in Iraq.

This resolution that we are voting on is very simple. It has two

sections. The first section affirms our support for our troops who are

serving and have served in Iraq.

The second section expresses disapproval over the deployment of

21,000 combat troops in Iraq. These two simple statements aren't

legally binding. But they are binding promises to the American people

who voted for us to change the direction. Promises are important. When

soldiers and their families go to war, our government promises to

support them, and that we should.

Just think, if we made the same promise to the school children when

they go to school, that we would protect them from school violence and

fully support their efforts to get an education, and that we should.

Just think, if we made that promise to provide health care for 47

million Americans who are without health insurance today, and that we

should. The promise and the list of promises goes on and on, many unmet

domestic needs that are not getting attention because of the war in

Iraq.

Some say this resolution is meaningless. I disagree. It is a promise,

and promises are important.

If we can support our troops and we can support the teachers who are

educating their children, we can support the health care providers that

are caring for their loved ones.

By voting for this resolution, we are making a promise to the

American people to change United States' policy on the war. This

resolution doesn't end the war, but it begins a new direction.

This is the first time that we have said ``enough is enough'' to the

President. It is a good start. If we go on record in opposition to

troop surge, we can express our disapproval to the country's addiction

to oil and to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. We

can express our disapproval of the policy that keeps homeless people on

the streets, that keeps one in six American children living in poverty,

and allows our skies and oceans to continue to be polluted.

So to the American people, I thank you. I thank you for getting

involved, because when you do, politicians respond. You have empowered

us to chart a new course for the war in Iraq, and I am proud to cast my

vote for this resolution.

Today we are keeping our promise to the people, for what we do for

our brave troops, we can do for all of God's children. Yes, Mr.

President, we can tell you that you are wrong.

In closing, I think what this debate is about is to wake up the

world. America is coming back. It is coming back with the most powerful

force on Earth, the energized electorate. This resolution is a breath

of fresh air in our Nation's Capitol. It is time to get out of Iraq, it

is time to lead.

Thank you, Speaker Pelosi, for bringing us this far in just a few

short weeks.