Madam Speaker, the morning of September 11, 2001, I

was a Minnesota State senator meeting

with a group of local educators at a Perkins Restaurant in Woodbury,

Minnesota. Because you can't find a babysitter at 7 o'clock in the

morning, I had my three daughters with me at the restaurant when I

learned of the attacks. After that meeting, I dropped our girls off at

school and then, together with millions of Americans, in horror I

watched my television as the terror unfolded. Thousands of innocent

Americans were targeted for death that morning by an evil regime of

radical jihadists. Then came the challenge of explaining to our

children the magnitude of the tragedy that had just befallen our

Nation. As a mother, I can tell you it was one the most difficult

conversations that I have ever had.

September 11 galvanized Americans. We knew without a doubt that we

had an enemy, but America fought back, united. We were attacked on

September 11, but the radical Islamic jihadists declared war on

innocent Americans long before that morning and, chillingly, that war

continues even today. Their brand of evil chooses to kill the greatest

number of innocent civilians. They are a cruel enemy. They are

unwavering in their resolve to seek the total annihilation of the

United States of America and of our freedoms, and of our Western allies

especially. They seek to destroy our friend, the State of Israel.

Today, Iraq is the central front in this war, and that is according

to the radical Islamists themselves. Some in this Chamber may want to

deny that fact. However, it is the jihadists who chose Iraq as the

central front in the war on terror. It wasn't the United States. And we

fight them on their turf. Al-Zawahiri has said many times that Iraq is

one of the crucial fields in the Islamist war. The radical Islamists

know that they cannot beat us with guns and with bullets alone. They

can only beat us in one way, and that is if they crumple the resolve of

America to fight and to win this war.

To American soldiers, I want to say to you specifically tonight, know

that many of us here in the United States Congress support you and your

mission. We pray for you. We love you. We appreciate you and your

sacrifices on behalf of our freedoms. It is because of your bravery

that we will defeat the radical jihadists. Surrender is not an option,

not if our goal is the maintenance of freedom.

It is very telling, I think, that the resolution that we are debating

this evening only states what those on the other side of the aisle

oppose. After all these hours of debate, the American people have yet

to hear a plan from the Democrats for victory in this war against

terror.

I believe, and you, our troops, know that victory against the evil

people who want to kill Americans transcends politics. Victory in this

war means that no mother will have to explain to their children the

death of thousands of innocent Americans.

American soldiers, please know that many of us in this Congress stand

strong in our resolve to support you and our fight to preserve

America's freedoms. On my watch, I pledge to you during this, my term

in Congress, that I will stand for you, and I will vote to preserve

America's freedom.

And I want to say to you this evening that it is American soldiers,

Minnesotans, who are in the National Guard. It is members of the

Minnesota National Guard who make up over 10 percent of this increase

in troops. Minnesota is supplying over 10 percent of those troops.

I had the brigadier general of the Minnesota Guard in my office

yesterday, and I asked him, What is the morale? What is the message

that these troops want me to know? And he said, They want you to know

that they stand ready to fight, and their morale is high.

I say thank you to the Minnesota National Guard. Thank you for your

sacrifice. Thank you for your bravery. I will stand with you. Just as

the Minnesotans who stood first in line in the battle to fight for our

Union, it is Minnesota who is standing strong in this battle to fight.

It is the battle of our time, the balance of our generation, and I

stand with you.