Madam Speaker, the great poet, Maya Angelou said, ``When I

knew better, I did better.''

I am a member of the Progressive Caucus, proudly so, because I

believe that we must always strive to do better to truly make progress.

A sign of intelligence and learning is to take the knowledge that we

have acquired and adjust our goals accordingly. For some, it seems to

be a badge of honor to stay the course, no matter what facts have come

to light to contradict that course.

So what did some think they knew then, and what do we actually know

now?

Some thought Iraq played a part in the attacks of 9/11. Now we know

better.

Some thought that invading Iraq would not diminish our ability to

continue our mission in Afghanistan, defeat the Taliban, and find Osama

bin Laden, the mastermind of the terrorist attacks in America. Now we

know better, but we still don't know where Osama bin Laden is.

Some thought that the intelligence used by the President to lead us

to war was accurate. Now we know better.

Some thought that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction,

which could not be discovered by the U.N. peacekeepers. Now we know

better.

Some thought that Saddam Hussein tried to purchase yellow cake

uranium from Niger. Now we know better.

Some thought that we did not need the support of the free world to

enter into war. Now we know better.

Some thought we would never send our troops into harm's way without

proper equipment. Now we know better.

Some people thought the people of Iraq would welcome us with open

arms, and that the war would be won swiftly. Now we know better.

Some thought on May 1, 2003, some 4 years ago, that the mission was

accomplished. Our President told us so on an aircraft carrier in a

photo-op. Now we know better.

Most importantly, we know that young Americans have heeded their

country's call and have placed themselves in harm's way to serve

America. There is nothing nobler than the sacrifice made by our men and

women in uniform. But such sacrifice should never be secured through

deception. Now we know better, and we must do better.

Early on, many of my colleagues in the Progressive Caucus did not

believe all they were being told about the connection between 9/11 and

the terrorists and Iraq. We were all very concerned that pursuing an

invasion of Iraq would be an act of aggression unheard of in our

Nation's history.

What makes America unique is we believe that our Nation is founded on

the rule of law, and that is what has made our country great and why we

have been respected all over the world.

Millions of Americans put faith in the administration. Many could not

have imagined that such a disastrous course would be pursued without

truth beyond the assurances that were given. But now we know.

We know we have lost the goodwill of many of our allies. We know we

have no exit strategy. We know that more Americans will sacrifice their

lives. We know that mothers, fathers, wives, husbands and children will

weep. Children will be orphaned, and young people will spend their

lives maimed. And for what?

We can choose enlightenment or we can choose blind ignorance. We can

choose to wrap ourselves in the American flag and claim that anyone who

demands answers about the reasons for sending our troops into harm's

way is unpatriotic and does not support our troops.

We can choose to use the knowledge we now have, or we can cling

irrationally to the President's failed policies that led us to war.

The Earth is not flat. The sun does not resolve around the Earth, and

we did not go to war for the reasons we were told. I don't know what

the real reasons were. Maybe we will never know. But we do know better

now and, knowing better, we must do better.

That is why I support this resolution, why I support our troops, why

I oppose the escalation, and why we must follow the recommendations of

the Baker-Hamilton Commission and shift from the war zone to the

diplomatic arena. We have gone from shock and awe to aw shucks.

And escalating this war by putting 20,000 Americans into the streets

of Baghdad, ala Mogadishu, aka Blackhawk Down, is inviting a 21st

century Pickett's Charge or a Charge of the Light Brigade.

May God save us if the President of the United States will not.