Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. While

I believe that the President as the Commander in Chief has the inherent

authority to manage the conduct of congressionally approved military

action, I have serious concerns that a surge in the number of U.S.

combat troops in Iraq is not the best course of action at this time.

The deployment of 21,500 additional combat troops to Iraq is not the

answer. I agree with former Secretary of State Colin Powell when he

stated: ``I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad

for the purposes of suppressing this communitarian violence, this civil

war, will work.''

Secretary Powell is not alone in his belief. Generals Wesley Clark,

Barry McCaffrey, John Abizaid, and James Conway have also made

statements to this same effect.

I have traveled to Iraq and I have met with our military forces. And

I believe our foremost commitment must be to their safety. I strongly

believe that we must concentrate our efforts on preparing the Iraqi

Government for the task of providing security to their own citizens.

Our forces in Iraq should be primarily focused on training and

supporting Iraq's own military and police.

We must continue working to shift the responsibility for security

from the U.S. forces to those of the Iraqi Government. It is only

through this path that we will ensure the safe and orderly return of

our brave men and women.

Empowering the Iraqi people and the Iraqi Government must be our

primary goal. I will continue fighting to ensure that our service men

and women have every tool and every resource that they need to carry

out their duties and return home safely.

We must all dedicate ourselves to ensuring that our brave men and

women in uniform have all of the unconditional support and thanks.

Their sacrifices and bravery must never be forgotten. We should also be

mindful of those who have served and serve in our National Guard and

Reserve units, and those that are not yet American citizens but who

still serve our country with distinction.

Let us always remember the lives of more than 3,000 dedicated

Americans who have lost their lives in this conflict, and the thousands

and thousands of American soldiers that have been injured.

It is time to be bipartisan and move forward with a comprehensive

plan for handing over responsibility to the Iraqi Government and

stabilizing the region. Iraq must become the responsibility of the

Iraqis. Let's surge forward only in the commitment to transfer

responsibility for Iraq to the Iraqis.

Only together can we ensure the safe return of our brave and

dedicated American troops.