Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution and in

support of a new policy in Iraq. Up until this point, the Bush

administration's Iraq policy over the last 3\1/2\ years appears to be

one of America's worst foreign policy blunders. More than 3,100 of our

brave men and women in uniform have been killed and more than 24,000

have been wounded, many very seriously, and hundreds of billions of

dollars have been spent and in some cases wasted. This has resulted

from the tactical mistakes, errors in judgment and other major missteps

by the Bush administration.

It is painfully clear that a change in strategy in Iraq is needed

now. We need a plan for bringing stability to Iraq and bringing our

troops home. Unfortunately, the President's plan to add over 20,000

additional troops does not provide this, and, therefore, I must support

this resolution.

I see three main flaws in the President's plan.

First, the administration has not provided convincing evidence that

this surge will succeed after many similar plans have failed. After

almost 4 years in Iraq, the American people are asking, why should we

have faith in this plan and place more troops in harm's way?

Second, by failing to provide clear benchmarks for success or a time

frame by which we can expect the surge to yield positive results, the

President's plan appears to commit our country to a ``stay the course''

strategy with no clear end in sight. Aid should be tied to a deadline

for progress by the Iraqi Government.

Third, and most importantly, the President continues to place too

much emphasis on a military solution, when it is clear that force alone

will not solve this crisis. Solutions must support broad international

engagement to promote stability and reconstruction in Iraq and must

address political, economic and religious issues.

Because of the need for such a plan, earlier this year I laid out a

set of recommendations, and this week I introduced H.Res. 152 based on

these. My proposal consists of three core recommendations.

First, encourage achievement of important goals and national

reconciliation, security and governance by arranging a peace conference

for Iraq's ethnic and religious factions, similar to the conference

that led to the Dayton Accords. One venue for this would be El

Salvador, which has shown a strong commitment to stabilizing and

rebuilding Iraq and has gone through its own recent history of a bloody

civil war and ensuing reconciliation.

But wherever and however it is done, the political, economic and

religious issues must be addressed if peace and security are to be

established in Iraq. And it is essential that more pressure be put on

the Iraqi Government and all interested parties in Iraq to find and

accept real solutions so the American forces can begin withdrawal.

The second recommendation is to seek international cooperation to

develop solutions for Iraq. This should include calling an

international conference that will work on putting together a

peacekeeping force and setting up an international reconstruction

program.

Iraq's strategic position in the volatile Middle East, its potential

to become a terrorist safe haven, its large supply of oil and the great

potential for a humanitarian catastrophe make security in Iraq a

critical international issue. It is time for America to engage the

nations of the world to encourage them to address this international

crisis.

The final recommendation is to require the administration to give

Congress detailed reports on the situation in Iraq so that we can make

informed decisions regarding funding for reconstruction and deciding

when American forces can be redeployed. This new Congress has been

vigorously conducting oversight after 3 1/2 years of congressional

neglect, but we must have the full cooperation of the administration.

If the recommendations laid out in my resolution are followed, I

believe American troops can begin redeployment in 2007, leaving a

secure, stable Iraq.

As the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, ``The search for

genuine justice and peace in Iraq requires moral urgency, substantive

dialogue and new direction.'' Unfortunately, the President does not

give us this. That is why his plan is discouraging to many Americans

who are weary of this war.

But no one is wearier than our troops and their families. This past

weekend I spoke to a soldier who spent 13 months in Iraq and will

likely be returning. He told me that it is important to make sure that

we let our troops know that they have our complete support. We cannot

let anything in this debate be construed otherwise. If this surge

occurs even after we pass this resolution, we must continue to support

our troops and pray for them every day, so that by God's grace they can

succeed in their mission.