Mr. Speaker, on Monday morning of this week I had the

opportunity to recognize and honor 53 elderly widows of veterans of

World War II and the Korean War.

The sacrifices of that Great Generation are legendary, and they are a

reminder of the sacrifice of the current generation of our military men

and women who have heeded the call to service in defense of our Nation.

Their patriotism, their willingness to put themselves in harm's way,

possibly to pay the ultimate price for our Nation, should give us all

pause.

So, Mr. Speaker, I stand here with deep gratitude and respect for the

sacrifices of all of our troops, but especially for the 3,124 Americans

killed in Iraq and those tens of thousands injured.

I stand here with great sympathy for the mothers and fathers, sons

and daughters, whose loss is irreplaceable. I stand here tonight firmly

and strongly in support of this resolution, in support of the troops,

and in opposition to the President's escalation of our military

involvement in the war in Iraq.

Let there be no misunderstanding. The men and women serving our

Nation in our Armed Forces will continue to receive the support they

require during their training, while they are in theater and when they

return home.

It is in honor of their service and the sacrifices of their family,

and the love of our country that we share that I stand to make it clear

that the President's plan for Iraq to escalate the number of troops and

to continue his failed conduct of this war is wrong.

Escalation of this war will not make our Nation safer. Escalation of

this war will not stabilize Iraq. Escalation of this war will not move

us closer to bringing our troops home, and escalation of this war will

not better protect Americans from those terrorists who would stop at

nothing to bring grave danger to our Nation and our allies. It is for

these reasons that the President's escalation of the war in Iraq is

wrong.

At a time when so many current and former military leaders, as well

as the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, recognize the need for political,

rather than military solutions to the ever increasing violence, that

the President is so gravely misguided in sending more of our men and

women into combat in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is the answer to a simple question: Do

you believe that an escalation of this war will bring our troops home

sooner, and will it help the Iraqis achieve the national reconciliation

needed to bring a lasting peace to their nation? I and the majority of

Americans do not think so.

We believe the facts are clear. Escalation of this war fails to

address the administration's strategic and diplomatic failures. It does

not move us closer to success.

What we now need to succeed in Iraq is an overwhelming political and

diplomatic force, not more American combat troops. Instead, the

President should be working to end U.S. combat involvement in Iraq. To

do so, he must demand that the Iraqis take charge of their internal

security, should demand that the Iraqi President take the lead in

national reconciliation, he should engage all the regional parties to

prevent this war from escalating regionally and to explore every

diplomatic and political solution to end this war.

Finally, the President must be accountable for his actions to this

Congress and to the American people.

Mr. Speaker, over the first 6 weeks of the Democratic control of

Congress, we have begun to move our Nation in a new direction, to

restore credibility and ethics in this Chamber and to put the interests

of everyday Americans in the forefront. There is so much more to do,

here at home, and in our relations internationally, to better ensure

the security and opportunity for all Americans.

The war in Iraq overshadows all that we do. The war has already cost

this Nation so much, young lives lost, greater uncertainty and

instability in the Middle East, greater hostility towards our own

Nation and financial costs that will take years to repay. So it is

timely and right that we take action now to change direction and

strategy in Iraq.

I stand with the majority of Congress in support of this resolution,

in support of our troops, and in opposition to the escalation of U.S.

combat troops in

Iraq. This resolution sends the President a very strong message. It is

our hope and the hope of the American people that he heeds it.