Mr. Speaker, there is no more important

issue facing our Nation today than the prolonged, painful, deadly war

in Iraq. Next month America's courageous and determined troops start

year 5 of combat operations inside Iraq.

As Iraq continues to deteriorate into a failed state of endless

killing, President Bush has decided not only to stay the course but to

escalate America's combat presence.

The resolution we debate tonight puts Congress in step with the

American people in rejecting the President's escalation of the war.

This resolution supports our troops and sends a clear message to

President Bush that he is increasingly isolated in believing that

Iraq's future can only be salvaged by sending more Americans into their

civil war.

Let us remember that year 5 in Iraq will start with over 150,000 U.S.

troops in the midst of an Iraq civil war. Year 5 in Iraq will start

with 2,600 Minnesota National Guardsmen and -women who have already

served and sacrificed for a year, being ordered to serve an additional

4 months of duty. Year 5 in Iraq starts with over 3,100 American troops

having sacrificed their lives and nearly 24,000 troops having

sacrificed their bodies.

To all of our veterans and their families, I offer my prayers, and I

pledge my support in the difficult months and years ahead. With a true

sense of humility and respect and admiration for their service and

sacrifices, I thank you, I thank your families for what you have

endured.

Our troops have always done their jobs with skill, with determination

and courage. And now it is time for the elected leaders of this Nation

to respond with courage and skill and forethought to the challenges

presented in Iraq. It is time for the people of Iraq, the diverse

ethnic groups, the religious sects, their tribal leaders, to decide for

themselves whether their future is to be one of ongoing murder,

revenge, civil war, or reconciliation, peaceful cooperation and

security. It is time to end Iraq's dependence on U.S. troops and to

fully transfer the responsibility for security and governance to the

Iraqis. It is time to start the process of bringing American troops

home safe, soon. It is time to bring this war in Iraq to an end.

Achieving peace in Iraq will require an Iraqi political solution.

Peace requires a robust, active, tireless diplomacy from the United

States, in partnership with Iraq's neighbors and the entire world

community. This Congress has the opportunity and the obligation to

advance a foreign policy vision rooted in the belief that Iraq's future

requires shared global commitment.

Tomorrow Congress will pass this bipartisan resolution. This

resolution is important because it is the second step in putting the

White House on notice. The first notice was delivered to President Bush

by the American people last November when they elected a new majority

to Congress. The American people elected this majority because they

wanted this very debate to take place, because they reject the ``stay

the course'' status quo in Iraq.

Instead of hearing the American people, instead of acting on the

recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, instead of learning from his

past mistakes in Iraq, President Bush decided to escalate the war.

Rather than take the counsel and the advice of experienced statesmen

and trusted military leaders, President Bush acted alone and decided to

escalate the war.

Now our President calls himself ``The Decider.'' In America, the

people, not the President, are the ultimate deciders in our democracy,

and the people and this Congress have decided that the escalation of

combat troops into Iraq is misguided. This Congress has the authority

and the obligation to hold the President accountable, and this House is

ready to exercise its constitutional powers.

The American people are demanding action to end this war in Iraq. Let

us listen to the American people. Tomorrow let us pass this important

resolution and begin the process of working together as Americans to

end the war in Iraq.