Mr. Speaker, I am excited about being here. I

want to thank the gentlelady for yielding. But I am going to put my

prepared notes to the side here, because I don't think that is needed

at this point, because we are well into debate now, Mr. Speaker, on

this very issue of Iraq.

I would like to disclose to the House that I am not a member of the

armed services. I have never served in a forward area. I wasn't even a

member of the ROTC. But I am a Member of the U.S. Congress, and I have

been federalized to come here to represent my constituents and the

people of this great country.

I know sometimes we say some things on the floor that we don't really

mean, and then there are some things we do really mean.

I had the opportunity to go to the White House today to speak to the

President on this very issue, and I shared with him, delivered the

message from the majority of the Members of this House of

Representatives on a bipartisan basis, Republicans and Democrats that

have come to this floor and said they are going to vote in the

affirmative on this resolution because they don't believe in the

escalation of troops.

A supermajority of the Members of the House have not served in the

military. Now, do we respect and honor those that allow us still to

salute one flag? You are 110 percent right as it relates to my feelings

towards that. And I respect those Members who have been in the ROTC and

came up through college and what have you and joined the Reserves and

active duty. I trust their judgment. They have the right to say what

they want to say when they want to say it.

But I shared with the President that this will pass. And he shook his

head and said, ``I believe it will pass too, Kendrick.''

I said, ``Mr. President, here is something else that we have to be

together on, and there has to be some level of compromise.''

Yes, this is a nonbinding resolution, but this is the first time that

the President has ever had any, any, any pressure from the Congress on

his original thoughts and what he says military commanders call for.

Now, since folks have been talking about who they are here on this

floor and what they have done and chest beating and all, I have been a

member of the Armed Services Committee. I am a member of the Ways and

Means Committee now and still on Armed Services on a waiver.

I said I wanted to go back to Armed Services because we are at war

and we have to make sense here in this House. We just can't say we are

there and we got to stay there as long as we got to stay there, until

the last insurgent says that they give up. Well, guess what? They are

not going to give up. They are not going to give up, and they are not

going to say, well, we are leaving. They are not going to say that.

So if our mission is to stay there as long as the last insurgent is

there, so someone would not be looking at troops leaving on the plane

saying we won, if that is the issue, then we have to readjust our

thinking here.

Let me just share something with you. I said to the President, ``Yes,

this is nonbinding, but it means a lot. It sends a message to the

country that we heard them last November.''

You know the reason why this House is in the majority for the

Democrats this time? You know why? Because the rubber stamp Republican

Congress rubber stamped everything that the President sent to this

House and to the Senate. And if this was about politics, I would just

go home and sit and watch this debate on television and talk to my wife

and tell my wife, guess what, sweetheart? The Democrats are about to

gain a greater majority, because the American people are going to

continue on a bipartisan way, not just Democrats, Republicans,

independents, those that never voted before, will start voting because

they think that we are not listening.

Now, I am going to share this also with you, what is very, very

important. I said, ``Mr. President, it is nonbinding, but you are going

to have a supplemental that is going to come through, and there has to

be language in there that speaks to the point of readiness, speaks to

the point of the fact that if you say we are going to send 20,000

combat troops and 3,000 support personnel, that they have what they

need to carry out the mission.''

The President heard what I had to say and came right back and said,

``Kendrick, do you believe for a minute that I would put troops in

harm's way if the military commanders did not tell us what we had?''

Respectfully I told the President, ``It has happened before.'' I have

sat next to Mr. Ryan in the Armed Services Committee and watched four

star generals answer the question, ``Do you have what you need?''

``Yes, we have it.''

Then we went to Iraq twice. Not once. Not when somebody told me that

got off the plane that came back from Iraq and said, ``Kendrick, guess

what.'' In Mosul, in Baghdad, folks getting ready to go out on patrol

did not have up-armored vehicles. And I am a Member of Congress. You

would think someone would bring up-armored vehicles out because they

have Members of Congress there. And people are there saying, and the

troops are there saying, soldiers, in the field, 18 months on the

second deployment, saying, ``Congressman, I know what you think, but

let me tell you something: We don't have what we need.''

They still do not have what they need. So I come to this floor, yes,

with great passion. I was not a member of the military, but doggone it,

I am a Member of Congress. I am not going to let any Member of Congress

make me believe or any other Member believe that they are less of a

Member because they do not have the credentials that the next person

has.

What I do know is that someone woke up early Tuesday morning at 7:00

a.m. to vote for representation in this U.S. House of Representatives,

and doggone it, they are going to get, and those troops are going to

get it.

So tomorrow it is going to be judgment time. Either you are with

going in the old direction or in the new direction.

And the only reason that I have comfort, Mr. Speaker, tonight is the

fact that I know that there is going to be a bipartisan vote on that

board, just like it was on the minimum wage, just like it was as it

relates to prescription drugs, just like it was in cutting back

interest rates on student loans. All these bipartisan votes, and this

is going to follow the number of those bipartisan votes. I know that we

are going to start having the kind of oversight we have to have on this

war.

I do not believe that it would be a full pull out of troops, and I am

not even looking for that, but I am looking for management of this war

in Iraq, and I am glad that we are having this debate.