Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me

time.

I stand here today in support of House Resolution 63, a long time

coming, but as it is always said, it is right on time. I stand here to

speak for the millions of Americans today who have had enough, who have

had enough of this war, its unjust nature, its over $500 billion that

has been spent there in Iraq and Afghanistan and not spent in our own

country.

I stand here today in support of H. Con. Res. 63 because this war has

lasted longer than World War II. My 87-year-old father fought in the

Navy at Pearl Harbor during World War II. One of my political mentors,

a great man, Mayor Coleman Alexander Young, a former Tuskeegee Airman,

fought during World War II. It is time to bring our troops home. It is

time for us to change the course.

As we celebrate this Black History Month, the theme of the

Congressional Black Caucus during these times are change course, do

something different, act, speak, donate, join, confront the crisis, the

crisis of the war which is why we are here today, and then continue the

legacy that has brought this country to greatness.

Many of my Congressional Black Caucus members have served in the

military. John Conyers, Charlie Rangel, Ed Towns, Bobby Scott, William

Jefferson, Sanford Bishop, all able men who have fought and served in

our military over the years.

We come to you, tonight, this evening, as members of the

Congressional Black Caucus, proud Americans. We love our country. We

serve our people. And we want to remain the strongest Nation in the

world.

Who speaks for the American people in this time of crisis? They spoke

to us last November when they said enough is enough. The first military

man who died in wars for our country's independence was Crispus

Attucks, who fought in the Revolutionary War, an African American man

who gave his life because he loved this country, could not vote at the

time, could not own property, but again he fought in a war because,

again, this was the greatest country in the world.

So what do we do today as we discuss H. Con. Res. 63? It is time to

engage in a diplomatic solution. We cannot win this war militarily. The

generals, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have spoken out against the

escalation. What is the plan, Mr. President? How do we bring our

soldiers home, redeploy them on the periphery, and make our country

safe, and, at the same time, invest those dollars in Americans' lives,

in their children's lives?

Dr. King wrote a book, ``I Have the Strength.'' I have the strength

to stand before you today for the American people. I have the strength

to let you know that we as a Nation can be all that God wants us to be.

That in fighting wars, and wars will come from time to time, this is

the time to bring this one to the end.

I will protect and speak out for the over 3,100 families who have

lost young men and women, over the tens of thousands who are blinded

and amputees, and over the many hundred thousands we do not yet know

who will be in need of mental health services as our mental health

capacity in this country has been shredded.

Those dollars have to be invested so that we take care of our

veterans. I have the strength to stand here before you this evening

because it is time, as we debate H. Con. Res. 63, that we rise up as a

Nation and speak out and continue our legislative responsibilities, as

I stood before you, took my oath of office that I would protect this

country, our Constitution, against both domestic and foreign

intimidation.

I stand before you tonight as one of 43 members of the Congressional

Black Caucus during this African American History Month, who love our

country, who want us to invest in America's families. H. Con. Res. 63

will begin that discussion. It will make it available that we might

change course, do something different, listen to the American people.

We love our troops. We served in those troops. Our families served.

We want the strongest military that we have available. We are now

having in Iraq equipment shortages. If we spent over $503 billion, why

is it that equipment is not adequate for our soldiers to engage in

battle?

Accountability. The Inspector General recently reported $9 billion is

unaccounted for. That is $9 billion as part of the $500 billion that

could be invested in American families. So I say as I stand here, H.

Con. Res. 63, vote ``yes.'' Let's change course.

I am honored and blessed with the understanding of a power greater

than that of any singular or even collective Membership of this

Congress. That power has allowed Congress to finally debate the most

pressing question of our time--the War in Iraq. As I prepared myself to

speak in support of H. Con. Res. 63, a very simple and very clear

declaration that Congress supports our troops, but we oppose the

escalation of this war, I reflected upon the words of one of the

greatest warriors for peace this world has ever known, Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr. A prolific author, Dr. King wrote a book entitled,

``Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?'' In it, Dr. King

writes that ``we are faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are

confronted with the fierce urgency of now. Life often leaves us

standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity.'' Congress

lost our opportunity for real debate on this war a little more than

four years ago. Congress has that opportunity now.

As this is the height of Black History Month, I also speak to America

today because of the investment that my ancestor put through 4

centuries of slave labor, 4 centuries of lynchings, 4 centuries of Jim

Crow laws, 4 centuries of sitting on the back of the bus, 4 centuries

of combined discrimination. And despite 4 centuries of second class

citizenship, African Americans have always heeded the call to arms in

defense of a country that did not always defend them.

Indeed, when it comes to war, the very first person, black, white,

Asian, Pacific Islander, or Native American to die for this country was

an African American, Crispus Attucks, who did not even have the right

to vote, the right to buy property, the right to be recognized as a

human being. He wanted the right to love our country. Like the hundreds

of thousands of African Americans who have followed his footsteps in

the military, I honor and I appreciate the service of all our women and

men in the military of all ethnicities. I support all of the women and

men who serve, without glory but with honor, efficiently and

effectively protecting all of us, never hesitating to pay the highest

price any human being could pay for our freedom.

I speak to America today because Americans have had enough, as best

selling author Frank Rich illustrates, of the ``decline and fall of the

truth.'' Of what decline and fall do I speak? Of ``Mission

accomplished.'' Of ``bring 'em on.'' Of ``shock and awe.'' Of ``dead or

alive.'' Of ``uranium coming from Africa.'' Of ``smoking guns becoming

mushroom clouds.'' Those Americans who have had enough are not just the

Democratic majority. They are not just the senior citizens, the working

class women and men who punch a time clock every day, or the liberals

of America. They conservatives, my Republican colleagues in Congress

and elsewhere, people in the red States and blue States, business

owners, military women and men and their families.

My father served this country honorably as a member of our military,

as have many of my relatives. Many members of the Congressional Black

Caucus have also served this country in our military. Just off of the

top of my head, my colleagues Chairman John Conyers, Chairman Charles

Rangel, Congressman Ed Towns, and Congressman Bobby Scott, among

others, have worn the uniform. My political mentor and hero, the late,

great mayor of Detroit, Michigan, Coleman Young, was one of General

Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.'s understudies as a Tuskeegee Airman as a

bombardier and navigator. During the Vietnam war, African Americans

served despite the opposition of Dr. King and other groups opposed to

the Vietnam war. They did it for the same reason why I serve this

country as a Member of Congress--because I love our country.

The investment that began when African Americans set foot in

Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 and continues to this very day is the

reason why I stand in support of this resolution that is but the first

step, to resolve the challenge that is Iraq. I am not a military

expert, and I don't pretend to be a military expert. But, as noted

genius Albert Einstein once said, ``insanity is doing the same over and

over again and expecting different results.'' Over and over, Congress

has spent over $503 billion in Iraq. Over and over, America's finest

have died, with more than 3,000 women and men, in Iraq. Over and over,

women and men are wounded or maimed, some for life, with more than

25,000 today. Today, we still cannot safely fly planes on a reliable

basis in and out of Baghdad. This is progress?

Progress is what Americans want. I know that war can be messy,

amorphous at times, and brutal. After a war that has lasted more than

the United States involvement in World War II, our military women and

men deserve progress. Our taxpayers deserve progress. Our current

course, and this surge, is not what Americans want, this is not what

Congress wants, this is not what I want.

Historians have generally acknowledged that the debate on the war in

1991 was one of the high marks of this institution. Congress did not

cede its role then to a popular President. Instead, Congress and the

White House worked together to achieve a worthwhile goal. It was

difficult. Both sides had to compromise. But guess what? That is how a

democracy works.

Unfortunately, Congress did not have this debate over 4 years ago in

a war that has now lasted longer than the United States was involved in

World War II. Thank God, we have that debate now. Thank God, we have

heard the voice of the American people. Thank God and the American

people, it is time for a change.

After this debate, after this resolution, I hope that this is the

beginning of our country, and our world, to begin to choose between

chaos and community. As Dr. King once wrote, ``we have a choice today--

nonviolent coexistence or violent co annihilation.''

Dr. King wrote another book entitled ``Strength to Love.'' It is

because I have the strength to love my country, the strength to love

our troops, the strength to love the oath I took for this office--that

I will protect and defend the Constitution of the United States,

against all enemies, foreign and domestic--that I have the strength to

support this resolution. We need to be smarter about our policy in Iraq

to include diplomatic and political solutions rather than repeating the

same military policies that have not worked, but continue to put the

finest of our women and men in harm's way. Republicans and Democrats,

conservatives and liberals, working together, can arrive at a solution

that establishes a stable democracy in Iraq, protects American

interests, and increases the role and responsibility of the Iraqi

people to fend for themselves.

Instead of ``bring them on,'' I hope that my colleagues agree that

Congress can start to ``bring them home.'' I will vote in strong

support of H. Con. Res. 63, and hope that Congress can quickly work to

bring stronger, binding legislation to the floor soon.