Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to

address an issue of grave importance to our country. I rise in support

of the resolution that is before us. The resolution continues to

support our troops who are presently fighting in Iraq. But it calls

into severe question the wisdom of escalating our military involvement

there.

I personally believe that escalating our efforts in Iraq is a

tremendous mistake. It is time for us to recognize that there is no

military solution to what is happening there. The only solution that

will work in Iraq is a political solution. Even those who believe this

surge to be an excellent strategy do so because they hope that it will

lead to more favorable conditions for a political settlement.

The political solution depends on the Iraqi people themselves

deciding to work together to knit their country together and to fight

in behalf of their own nascent democracy. The rampant violence in Iraq

is the result of a civil conflict in that country, and the Iraqi people

must decide whether they will truly have a real representative

democracy that includes the Sunnis, the Shiites, and other significant

segments of their society.

If the Iraqi Government is to stand up for its own future, we must

begin now to make it clear that we will not stay there forever and

continue to add our troops. I personally believe that the best way to

signal that our commitment is not open ended in this civil war is to

start now the withdrawal of some of our troops. However, short of that,

this resolution is an important first step toward ensuring that the

people of our Nation know that we are changing direction in Iraq, and

so that the people of Iraq will know that they must plan a future with

the United

States as an important ally, but not as an enforcer of the status quo

in their nation.

Madam Speaker, the justifications for the invasion of Iraq have long

ago been discredited. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There

was no nuclear threat. Every credible source and study has established

that there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda and

the tragic events of 9/11. These were the reasons that were given as

justification for our entry into the Iraqi war and that supported the

statement that our national interest was at stake. Unfortunately, since

the reasons were erroneous, no national interest exists.

Winning a military conflict, even if it were possible, does not

create a national interest. Adding more troops to fight under the

present conditions on the ground in Iraq cannot create a national

interest where none truly exists. Such a strategy will simply add more

human targets in a civil war that does not threaten America.

We are straining our troops and our military and financial resources

beyond all reasonable limits. We are decimating our National Guard

strength at a time when we have more than enough disasters here at home

to which we must attend.

At a time when Louisiana needs the support of our National Guard,

members of our National Guard are being called to serve in Iraq. At a

time when the New Orleans area residents struggle to rebuild following

the worst natural disaster in our Nation's history, and following

deadly tornadoes just 2 days ago, we need National Guard troops here at

home to fight crime in our streets and to keep our people safe. We need

the billions of dollars that we are spending on war and the rebuilding

of Iraq to wage a war on poverty and ignorance here at home. We need a

greater commitment to rebuilding the Gulf Coast communities, including

my beloved City of New Orleans.

Madam Speaker, let's not continue to make matters worse at home and

abroad by pursuing a policy in Iraq that cannot work, that has not

worked and that simply can no longer be justified.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution which

supports our troops in the field and supports, at the same time, the

commonsense objections to escalating our troop presence in Iraq. The

people of this great country eloquently expressed their disapproval of

the course of this war in the November elections, and on their behalf

we should do no less.