Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose this

resolution. In doing so, I want to say I understand and share in some

of the frustrations of those who are disappointed in the course of this

conflict.

Over the past few days we have heard passionate debate on both sides

of the issue from Democrats and Republicans alike. But I would say to

my colleagues, passing this resolution is not the answer to their

frustration. Not only is it purely symbolic and offers no productive

solution for helping our military succeed, it sends the wrong message

to our troops.

Instead of debating a resolution that says what we should not do in

Iraq, it seems to me a more reasonable question should be, how should

we go forward from here?

In January, the President put forth a plan to send reinforcements to

help secure key areas in and around Baghdad and Anbar province in order

to achieve a level of security to allow the Iraqi Government and

security forces to assume control. As we all know, it may work and it

may not.

But if the President, as Commander in Chief, and General Pace truly

believe this plan will succeed, then I believe it should be given a

chance to work.

Having listened to proponents and critics of the plan, it seems to me

its success or failure is dependent on some key factors, including,

first, whether our soldiers will be given the latitude to fully perform

their duties without political interference; secondly, whether the

Iraqi Government will be held accountable to live up to its

commitments; and, third, whether the Iraqis will finally take

responsibility for their own affairs.

Madam Speaker, the stakes in this debate are high. Iraq, indeed, is

now the primary battlefront in the global war on terror, and there are

no easy answers.

The House may pass this resolution this week, but in doing so, we

will have missed an opportunity for a better and more balanced debate,

including the chance to vote on a substitute bill.

Given the sacrifices our Nation has made, I agree the time to see

real progress in Iraq is now. We all want our troops to come home

safely and as soon as possible. But we also need for them to be

successful in order for our Nation to remain secure.

Though our patience is being tested, our men and women in uniform

deserve better from us than this purely symbolic resolution. They need

our complete and unqualified support.