Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

Madam Speaker, on December 31, 1776, with the fate of the Revolution

in doubt, General George Washington faced a challenge of convincing his

soldiers to stay in the fight. With their enlistments over, they wanted

to go home. Washington made an impassioned plea and even offered

volunteers a bonus. But no one responded. He spoke again, saying that

all they held dear was at stake. And finally one man stepped forward.

Then others followed.

Public opinion at that time was not on Washington's side. Only a

third of the population supported the war for independence. One-third

were openly hostile, and another one-third simply did not want to be

involved.

We should be grateful that George Washington was not obsessed with

public opinion polls.

Only days earlier Thomas Paine had written: ``These are the times

that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will,

in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that

stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny,

like hell, is not easily conquered.''

In the summer of 1863, Colonel Joshua Chamberlain of Maine faced a

similar crisis. He had to convince a group of mutineers to stand and

fight in a key battle. He promised to plead their case later if they

rejoined the ranks. They did, and helped him win the Battle of

Gettysburg.

Public opinion at that time was running against President Lincoln and

the war. It was lasting longer and costing more than anticipated. In

Congress, Democrats demanded the troops be brought home immediately,

but Lincoln stood by his convictions and won the war.

It is easy for us to look back on these pivotal moments in our

Nation's history without remembering how tough the going was, how

reluctant many of our own people were, and how it took strong

leadership to bring about victory.

Let's contrast those times with the situation today in Iraq. Clearly

the American people are tired and impatient with this war, and many

believe we cannot win. Yet troop morale is high. In testimony before

Congress last week, the senior enlisted personnel from each service,

the National Guard, and the Reserves, said our forces in Iraq believe

in what they are doing and that positive things are being accomplished.

But you don't have to take their word for it. The enlistment and

reenlistment figures themselves are a testimony to the commitment of

our troops. All service branches met and exceeded their goals in both

categories in 2006. The command sergeant major of the Marine Corps told

our committee that young people join the Marines today to get to the

fight. Knowing full well they will go to Iraq, they are signing up with

enthusiasm and purpose. It almost takes your breath away to hear the

troops who have been there say they continue to believe in our mission

and want to see it through to completion.

I hear the same thing from my constituents who have returned from

Iraq. They express frustration about the news media's focus on the bad

news. Returning troops tell of their successes in helping steer Iraq

toward a path of democracy and freedom.

I received an e-mail this week from a Mississippi soldier in Iraq. He

said, ``No one wants everybody home more than I do, but we must finish

the job. We are doing good things here and taking bad guys out of the

game.''

The most important question in today's debate is what message does

this resolution send to our military, to the volunteers who have been

serving so proudly in harm's way? And make no mistake, they are

listening to what we say here and watching what we do here. Will the

passage of this resolution give our troops encouragement? I don't think

so.

The Americans are conflicted about this war. A CBS poll this week

showed that only 44 percent of Americans support this resolution; 45

percent are opposed. That is all the more reason for leaders to lead.

Washington and Lincoln were not concerned about public opinion polls.

They did what was necessary to succeed, and that is what is called for

in the halls of Congress today.

I am convinced that deep in their hearts, most Americans realize we

are in a serious global war for survival against an enemy that wants to

wipe us off the face of the Earth. When all is said and done, the

American people want us to win this war. Success in Iraq is a key

element in winning against the terrorists.

Osama bin Laden's chief deputy has urged al Qaeda operatives in Iraq

to expel the Americans, extend the ``jihad wave'' to neighboring

countries, and 2 weeks ago he spoke of Afghanistan and Iraq as two

``most crucial fields.'' I regret to say that enemies like these will

be pleased when this resolution passes.

Madam Speaker, let's send the terrorists a message of strength and

resolve. Let's send a message of support and unity and confidence and

appreciation to our troops. This resolution sends the wrong message,

and I will vote against it.