Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of

H. Con. Res. 63. Today through this resolution, we reiterate our

support for our troops, these brave men and women, who even when they

did not have proper equipment and resources, continued to serve and

protect this country. Today we pledge to offer them the same support

they have so willingly given us throughout the conflict.

To date, 3,100 soldiers have given their lives in this war and over

20,000 have been injured. I often feel that we gloss over the numbers

and forget that each one was an actual person. They were somebody's

son, daughter, somebody's mother or father, somebody's brother or

sister. They were real people, as real as 19-year-old PVT. Brandon

Sloan and 1SG Robert Dowdy, who were the first soldiers from my

congressional district to become casualties of this war.

There have been many others, including SGT Michael Wiggins, a

graduate of Shaw High School in East Cleveland, killed on January 23;

or Charles King, a man described by family and friends as a highly

decorated, hardworking soldier, died October 14 of injuries sustained

when an improvised device detonated near his vehicle; and Samuel Bowen,

who was affectionately called ``Smokey'' and always had a great smile

on his face. He was killed when a rocket-propelled grenade exploded

near his vehicle.

At his funeral, Specialist Ronald Eaton, a soldier rescued by Bowen,

said, Without regard to himself, without regard to the injuries he had

sustained, Sam grabbed me and pulled me to safety.

All of these are special stories, but I will share a few more with

you about Brandon Sloan and Robert Dowdy.

Brandon Sloan was a special young man who exhibited a unique blend of

personality and strength, a loving child who played and enjoyed

spending time with other children. Later he became a big brother to his

sister Brittany, with whom he shared a close relationship.

He began his education in East Cleveland and remained in the district

until his family moved to Euclid. While in East Cleveland, he developed

a love for basketball and continued in various athletic pursuits.

In 1996, the family moved to Oakwood in the Bedford School District,

and there Brandon became a Bearcat. He confessed his hope in Christ

during his high school years and was baptized. Later, he pursued a

career in the military where he subsequently gave his life.

MSG Robert Dowdy was a native of Cleveland, a member of the 507th

Maintenance Company. He was a loving son and devoted husband, a

distance runner, placed second in a 10-kilometer run in El Paso.

Why am I talking about all of these personal things? Because somehow

in the course of this discussion, we have taken it away from being

personal, about people. We stand here on the floor talking about a

surge, or giving life and saying we are not supporting these troops.

These families want their babies to come home and so do I.

This past weekend I spoke to the 112th Battalion of the Ohio National

Guard. The battalion is the oldest and most decorated military

organization in the State of Ohio, with lineage and honors dating back

to and including World War I and World War II. These men and women have

sacrificed greatly for this country, and now they are being asked to

support the President's plan to send 20,000 more troops.

I simply cannot support it. You have heard all the things I said

previously. This is not the way. We do not need to send any more

Brandons or Robert Dowdys or Michael Kings or Sam Bowens over there to

die.

We pledged to take this country in a new direction without regard to

the war in Iraq, through greater accountability, oversight, and through

stronger diplomatic and political initiatives.

At the services for the 25th Marine Regiment, a Band of Brothers, we

lost some 12 young men from Brook Park, and I said to them in my

closing words, because these are the words I think these young men are

saying to us:

``Please celebrate my life, please have no regrets; we did not spend

all the time we wanted, yet the time we had was well spent. We did not

reach every rung of that ladder, yet we wrung all that we could from

each height.

``We did not sing every song, yet we sang every note of the song we

sang, we did not laugh all the time, but when we did we often laughed

until we cried or until our stomachs hurt; and when we cried, we cried

until our tears ran dry.

``But most of all we loved, and our love is everlasting, if you look

for us listen for us, but most of all live for us.

``We have fallen but you can lift us up. Your love, your faith, your

support, and your pride was what we needed then; God's love, grace and

mercy is what we need now.''

Lift these young men and women who have been killed in Iraq, lift

them up and say to the world, no surge, no more young people will be

lost in Iraq. Bring our troops home.