Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me

time. I thank him for the disproportionate service of his own

constituents in this war.

As the House prepares to consider a bill for the first full House

vote in two centuries for the taxpaying American citizens who live in

the Nation's Capital, that have fought in all our wars, I dedicate

these words to the first D.C. resident to die in the Iraq war, 21-year-

old National Guard Specialist Darryl Dent of the 54th Transportation

Company, and to the other residents of the District of Columbia who

have died in this war without a vote in this House.

Like the soldiers from every State and territory, Specialist Dent did

not have the luxury of equivocation. He

acted, so must we. With uncommon bravery, loss of life, and unique

injuries, our troops have acted. So must we.

The resolution before us asks quite simply: Whose side are we on? Do

we support our troops best by committing another 20,000 to a war where

only they must act and only they are accountable? Do we support our

troops by sending more of them to another battle of Baghdad while the

insurgents scatter to return as before, unless, of course, our troops

are to be permanently deployed in the cross-hairs of a civil war?

Do we support our troops by sending 20,000 more whose lives will be

in the hands of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the man we are asked to

believe will help put down the militias responsible for civil war

conditions, although their leaders are part of his government?

Madam Speaker, the vote this resolution seeks is about our troops

more than about the war. Four years of worsening insurgency have

rendered a verdict of its own on the war, that even great powers cannot

alone win another country's civil war without its leadership and

without diplomacy.

Yet another verdict on this war has been rendered by the migration of

2 million Iraqis; among them, the physicians and other professionals

who will be desperately needed in postwar Iraq. The 50,000 monthly who

flee for safety have created the largest refugee crisis in the Mideast

since 1948.

No, Madam Speaker, dispatching 20,000 more American troops to Iraq is

not about the war, it is about those troops and the troops that are

already there. Most tragically, this war will be remembered for citizen

soldiers like Specialist Darryl Dent, the largest number to be uprooted

from family and job since World War II.

Recently more than 60 percent of the fatalities were National Guard

soldiers who typify average Americans, computer operators, teachers,

police officers, who joined to serve at home but were always ready and

willing to serve anywhere.

By what right do we call on them again, some for the second or the

third time? Devoted though they remain, declining enrollment has had to

be bolstered by increasing incentives to preserve the volunteer, all-

volunteer military. Here in the capital, the Guard's unique mission to

protect the Federal presence is at risk, just as those called away from

every State have weakened homeland protection and security.

As Mississippi and Louisiana Guards were serving in Iraq, Guard units

from every State except Hawaii plus 7,500 active duty soldiers were

necessary during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. By what right do we surge

troops into Iraq? Are we about to throw more citizen soldiers and

weekend warriors with truncated training into a war with results like

those of 2005?

Reserve and Guard were 10 percent of the fatalities during major

combat in March and April of 2003. By August of 2005, 57 percent of

U.S. fatalities were reservists that year. How can we ask our troops to

give yet again? They have given to the preemptive war against weapons

of mass destruction that did not exist. They have given as the war

morphed into a war for democracy that is not yet in sight.

The question before us, my friend, is not what will the President do

or even what will we do. The question before us is what more can we ask

our troops to do after 4 years of repetitive brave combat duties?

The question answers itself. Let the troops pass the baton to the

Iraqis. Bring our troops home to their children, their families, their

mortgages, and, yes, to all of us.