Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from

American Samoa (Mr. Faleomavaega) for yielding this time to me, and

thank the Speaker for convening this very important debate this

evening.

Madam Speaker, I come to the floor this evening to express my

unconditional support for H. Con. Res. 63. I also come to the floor

this evening to thank the leadership, to thank Speaker Nancy Pelosi

and the majority leader, and Chairman Ike Skelton for their leadership

on this issue, and thank them very much for scheduling this debate. I

am confident that the American people are also appreciative of this

debate.

Madam Speaker, 4 years ago, shortly before I was elected to this

body, the President of the United States convinced this Congress that

dictator Saddam Hussein had in his possession weapons of mass

destruction, and that he was prepared to use those weapons against our

country. The world now knows that he was wrong, and history will decide

whether that intelligence was manipulated or whether it was an honest

mistake.

But this evening, Madam Speaker, the invasion we all know, happened.

We captured Baghdad, and we arrested Saddam Hussein, and he has now

been convicted and executed. But the search for weapons of mass

destruction revealed that there were no weapons whatsoever.

Our aim then turned to helping the Iraqi people create a democratic

government with free and fair elections, a constitution was ratified,

and elected representatives are now making decisions on what is best

for their country. The Iraqi Government has a security force in place,

and we are assisting in training them to defend their country.

In 4 years of fighting the brave men and women of our Armed Forces

have accomplished every mission put before them. They have performed

admirably and completed all that is possible militarily possible in

Iraq. There is an intractable problem on the ground in Iraq. The

tensions between the sectarian groups are centuries old. We all know

that, and our continued presence is exacerbating those tensions. It is

no longer a military problem, but a political problem best resolved

through diplomacy.

It is clear, Madam Speaker, that a continued open-ended military

action is not in the best interest of our country. It is not in the

best interest of the Iraqi people or the citizens of the Persian Gulf

region. We have reached the point where we need to turn Iraq over to

the Iraqis. Iraqis know that, so that the Iraqis will know that the

U.S. is not an occupying force.

Since the invasion we have lost 3,000 lives. We have heard that for

the last 2 days. And so many of those injuries are permanent. The

financial cost of this war exceeds $400 billion. The President is now

seeking another $245 billion to finance the war over the next 18

months.

Madam Speaker, if those funds were invested in rural America, there

is no question that we would improve thousands of lives in our own

country.

Our military and their families are tremendously strained. Some

troops are on their fourth and fifth deployments. Military personnel

costs are skyrocketing. Further strains on our Armed Forces will leave

this country unprepared for a wide range of threats that now exist. At

a cost to the American taxpayer of nearly $2 billion a week, we simply

will not have the resources needed to prepare for the wide variety of

future threats that our country may have to face and for our domestic

needs at home.

America has a problem and we must fix it. This debate this evening is

the first step in a new direction. Our goals in Iraq have been

accomplished, and it is now time to begin bringing our troops home. Now

is not the time for escalation. Surges have not helped before, and they

will not help now.

The time has come to redeploy and reset our force to begin addressing

our other challenges around the world and give us an opportunity to

repair our relationships with our allies and refocus on the war on

terror.