Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for

yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I support our troops wholeheartedly and without

reservation, but I cannot support a resolution that simply opposes a

new strategy without offering any alternative plan to win. There is too

much at stake.

Let us just think about where we are today as a country, about the

global war we are in with people with intent to kill Americans and how

that affects our strategy in Iraq. When considering this, we must

consider our Nation's history and other difficult times of war.

There have been many bleak moments in America's history, battles we

have been engaged in where American victory was far from certain.

In 1942, hell bent on dominating the world with his ideology, Adolph

Hitler and the Third Reich systematically marched through Europe,

taking the most basic freedoms from the Jewish people and killing

millions. The United States entered World War II reluctantly and we

were not ready for the hurdles we faced.

Don't forget, there were times when victory was far from certain. The

outlook was grim. Many Americans and Europeans alive today can remember

how bleak those times were as the war drug on and on and on. But we

didn't give up. We persevered, because we knew there was too much at

stake.

Eighty years before World War II, in 1862, President Lincoln faced a

war that most believed could not be won. He faced vocal and unrelenting

criticism for his resolve to win the Civil War. When the war began,

Lincoln called for 74,000 troops for 90 days; 74,000 troops for 90

days. And history has showed us that Lincoln greatly underestimated the

resources needed, because, as we know, over 620,000 soldiers were

killed during that war.

At a time in our history when it might have been politically

expedient to win the Civil War without first achieving victory,

President Lincoln pressed on, constantly seeking a new strategy, until

he found one that worked because so much was at stake.

Perhaps some of the resolve Lincoln displayed came from lessons he

learned 15 years earlier when he entered a smaller battle. In 1848,

Abraham Lincoln was an often criticized young

freshman Member of this body, the House of Representatives, and was

facing a difficult point in his career. Lincoln criticized the reasons

President Polk gave for getting us into the Mexican-American War, a war

that began before Lincoln came to office, a position that I can

identify with today as I stand here.

Then-Congressman Lincoln voted for a resolution that stated the

Mexican-American War was ``unnecessarily and unconstitutionally''

initiated by President Polk. Lincoln thought the war was nothing more

than a political move to grab land from the Mexican people.

My friends, it is legitimate and in fact our duty to question the

reasons why our country goes to war, and Abraham Lincoln showed us

that. However, he also showed us something else. Abraham Lincoln made

an incredibly important distinction that we can learn from today.

A Lincoln biographer, Doris Kearns Goodwin, writes that after being

criticized for that vote ``Lincoln sought to clarify his position,

arguing that although he had challenged the instigation of the war he

had never voted against supplies for the soldiers.''

This is an important point to make again. Lincoln sought to clarify

his position, arguing that although he had challenged the instigation

of the war he had never voted against supplies for the soldiers.

Lincoln knew the damage of condemning a war while claiming to support

the troops. Yet that is what this resolution before us does today.

During the American Revolution, the men and women who had become this

country's first citizens were declared by the King of England to be in

rebellion. The King sent soldiers across the Atlantic to quell the

uprising.

In every war, it is the average citizen who stands up and fights for

his neighbor's freedom. It is the same today. In response to the King

of England's attack, again it was the average citizen who raised his

hand, volunteered, stood up and fought for our freedom. A bookstore

owner, the manager of an iron foundry and a land surveyor all stood and

fought for our freedom. Those men were Henry Knox, Nathaniel Green and

George Washington.

During America's War for Independence, it was not clear if we would

prevail then. We lost battle after battle. Troops deserted the

battlefields. General Washington and his deputies persevered,

continuing to engage the enemy until the tide turned, because so much

was at stake.

We are the United States of America today and we are free because

General Washington refused to quit. We are the United States of America

today and we are free because Abraham Lincoln refused to quit. And we

are the United States of America today and we are free because

Roosevelt and Truman refused to quit. And we are the United States of

America today and we are free because of the sacrifice of the men and

women in uniform who put their lives on the line in Iraq, Afghanistan

and all around the world, preserving our freedom.

Today, the United States is engaged in another war, and just as

before we face an enemy that wants to destroy our way of life. Just as

before we face an enemy that thinks it is winning. Just as before our

country is divided. Just as before we are making mistakes. Just as

before we face a moment of truth about what to do next. And just as

before the consequences of losing are devastating.

The enemy is clear about what their intentions are by what they say

and what they do. Al Qaeda and the global movement that it has spawned

have made it clear they want nuclear and biological weapons. It is

clear they want to kill us, Americans. Osama bin Laden has called

acquiring nuclear weapons a ``religious duty.'' The fact is we are

engaged in a global war with people intent on killing Americans, and

regardless of how we got into Iraq, Iraq is now the central front of

that war.

And yet while we debate this nonbinding resolution, what is really at

stake is winning or losing. Like Lincoln, I was not in this office as

the war began. I understand the arguments. I understand the questions.

I have been asking questions, too, as an elected official in this body

for the past 2 years, as a concerned citizen, and before that, as a

veteran. I understand that there are many who think we should never

have entered Iraq. We now know there was faulty intelligence that led

to that decision.

But the war is upon us nonetheless. I am elected to deal with what is

happening now. Will we succeed? Will we win? Just as at other moments

in our history, those questions stand unanswered. The consequences of

declaring an end to the war in Iraq without victory would be felt for

decades. Our enemies around the world would be emboldened. Iran and al

Qaeda would declare victory. Our allies in Iraq would certainly face

bloodshed, and our allies around the world would question our resolve

to help protect them.

Sergeant Eddie Jeffers is a U.S. Army infantryman serving in Ramadi,

Iraq. Sergeant Jeffers has a firsthand appreciation for what is at

stake in Iraq and our presence there and what it means to the Iraqi

people.

He writes, ``We are the hope of the Iraqi people. They want what

everyone else wants in life: Safety, security, somewhere to call home.

They want a country that is safe to raise their children in. They want

to live on, rebuild and prosper. And America has given them that

opportunity, but only if we stay true to the cause and see it to its

end. But the country must unite in this endeavor. We cannot place the

burden on our military alone. We must all stand and fight, whether in

uniform or not. Right now the burden is all on the American soldier.

Right now hope rides alone. But it can change. It must change, because

there is only failure and darkness ahead for us as a country, as a

people, if it doesn't.''

Sergeant Jeffers' words hit at the heart of our present challenge in

Iraq. Our current strategy in Iraq is failing, and yet failure is not

an option. In November, the American people told us they wanted a new

strategy, not because they wanted to lose, but because they wanted to

win. Now we have a new strategy before us.

Is this new plan going to work? I don't know. No one in this body who

is voting on this resolution knows.

What I do know is that we must find a way to achieve victory, and

simply saying ``no'' to a new plan without offering up an alternative

will not work and sends a terrible message to our enemies and our

soldiers.

This is an historic war. America is engaged in a war for our freedoms

on a scale that we have never experienced before. I understand the

dissension, the questions and the uncertainty.

I understand the cost is high and the way is often unclear. I have

served in law enforcement for 33 years. I understand the loss. I have

lost partners and friends in the line of duty. I understand the cost of

freedom and the sacrifices that must be made. The sacrifices are hard,

they are tragic and they are never forgotten, but we must remain

focused and not let those sacrifices be in vain.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote ``no'' on this resolution.

Lincoln warned us against tying a criticism of the war to support for

our troops. Let us send a message to our enemies and our troops alike

that we will always support our young men and women who put their lives

on the line for our freedom.