I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding time to

me, and to say that I thank the leadership of this House. I thank

Speaker Nancy Pelosi and I thank Ike Skelton for bringing this

resolution forward.

You know, I served in the military, and I have great admiration and

respect for the military, and I also cannot understand why people are

saying that if you support this resolution you are not supporting the

troops. I can't make that connection because I support the troops, but

I must admit I also support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, 4 years have passed since this administration began its

ill-fated war in Iraq. No weapons of mass destruction have been found,

no coalition of nations has fought in the war, and the American people

are still waiting for a plan for a real war against terrorism.

Though Saddam Hussein is now dead, this fact alone has not been worth

nearly $400 billion in taxpayer funds, the loss of 3,000 lives, and

26,000 casualties. What message does this send to the American people?

I have been hearing this all day long coming from the minority side.

Let me tell you what the message is that we are sending to the

American people: That our priorities are upside down, and we need to

fix them.

I have opposed this war from the very beginning, because I was

concerned that we would come to this point where we would spend all the

money on the war and not have the resources to do the things to keep

our Nation and to make our Nation strong.

Almost all the speakers on the other side expressed their support for

the troops. I want you to know that on this side we also express our

support for the troops. This administration has asked us to cut funding

for children, for children's health insurance. We were asked to cut

critical funds for Medicaid and Medicare, a loss of dollars that may

cripple our public health system. Many of our hospitals are actually

closing, and we are asked to provide token funding so No Child Left

Behind becomes ``most children now are left behind.''

This war and its budgetary requirements are squeezing the American

people, and I say that enough is enough. But, no, the administration is

asking

for 20,000 more combat troops and approximately 15,000 support troops.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will cost

approximately $13 billion.

This administration has had troop surges in the past; this is not

new. What is different about this troop surge? It is more of the same,

just more targets we are sending.

In October, the administration sent more combat troops into Baghdad

to attempt to end the growing violence; however, the violence in

Baghdad has only grown worse. Now the United States military is caught

up in a very violent civil war, something they are neither trained nor

equipped to deal with. Sending additional troops to Iraq actually makes

things worse for Iraqi civilians and for our troops.

Our military is already stretched too thin. Many soldiers are doing

two and three and four tours of duty. The administration now plans to

send additional troops into a city almost the size of New York City,

and they may have to go house to house in order to keep warring sides

from killing each other.

What message does this send to the American people when we tell them

we have no more money for children's health insurance, no more money

for Medicaid, no more money for Medicare, no more money for senior

programs and no more money for children's education? And how do you

think the American people will react to more fatalities and more

wounded? How long will Congress keep supporting a war that has nothing

to do with ending terrorism?

I ask the question tonight, how long will this administration keep

ignoring the real needs of the American people? It is time for America

to withdraw from Iraq and focus on the real business of the American

people: better health care, more jobs, education for all of our

children. We should not send an additional 21,500 troops. That only

means we are sending additional targets into the area.

Let me say to you that I read the resolution, and I don't

know how you can arrive at that conclusion.