Mr. Speaker, the approaching vote on this resolution

has caused me and I am sure many of my colleagues to give serious and

considerable thought to the most difficult issue that faces America

today.

Like many of my friends on both sides of the aisle, and like many

Americans I am opposed to increasing our troop presence in Iraq. I am

sure we have all asked ourselves individually what we would do if we

were in the oval office at this time.

If I were in the oval office, if I were Commander in Chief, I would

tell the Iraqis something similar to what Benjamin Franklin told a

woman who asked him as he came out of the negotiations on the

Continental Congress, Dr. Franklin, what have you given us? He

answered, a Republic if you can keep it.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we have with our blood and treasure already

won a great victory when we deposed a dictator and helped the Iraqis

set up a fledgling democracy. Frankly, I believe it is up to them to

keep it.

Mr. Speaker, the fall of Saddam has helped create a situation in the

Middle East that we did not anticipate but one that can be exploited. I

believe that the ethnic and sectarian earthquake inside and across the

broader Middle East is underway. I believe the fault lines in this

conflict can be seen moving today, not just in Iraq, but in Lebanon,

Iran and elsewhere.

If I were Commander in Chief, I would do what I could to exploit the

situation. I believe it can be exploited, but not if we are acting as a

referee in what has become a civil war. I believe that prolonging or

increasing the U.S. presence in Iraq will virtually guarantee this

fault line will move in a way not advantageous to us.

Sure, if I was President, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you unequivocally I

would not be sending an extra 20,000 soldiers. But I am not President

of the United States, I am not Commander in Chief, I am a Member of

Congress. And while I have every right as a Member of Congress to voice

my concerns and objections to what I see as flaws in the strategies

this President may choose to employ, neither I nor this Congress has

the right to micromanage a war.

Mr. Speaker, our Constitution vests sole authority of the U.S.

military in the President of the United States, not in 435 Congressmen

or 100 Senators. Our Founding Fathers empowered the President, not the

Congress, with the authority precisely to avoid the kind of group

micromanagement of our military strategy that we are seeing on this

floor today.

I differ with the President on many things, Mr. Speaker. Indeed one

of them is the recently announced surge strategy. But while I am

concerned about the wisdom of the strategic military decision, Congress

does not have the authority nor the ability to manage this war or any

other by committee.

I fear that this resolution is just the beginning of a long-term

attempt by Congress to become the micromanager of the conflict in Iraq.

As many Members have correctly noted, this resolution is nonbinding,

but it has been described by its authors as just the bark from the

Congressional dog. The bite will come as they say during the

appropriations process.

As I said at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, for a time this resolution

posed a dilemma for me. But after hours of listening to the debate,

reading the Constitution, it helped me to decide how to vote, there is

no longer a doubt in my mind. I accept the wisdom of the Founding

Fathers and bend to the constraints of the document that we swear to

uphold and defend.

I hope that Members of both sides will think carefully about the

precedent that this debate will set for the future, for future

Presidents, future wars, future soldiers. I would ask them to join me

in opposing this ill-conceived resolution.