Thank you, Mr. Delahunt.

Mr. Speaker, the costs keep climbing. Thousands of our young brave

men and women have been killed. Next month we enter the fifth year of

this war, a war that has lasted longer than World War I or World War

II. Hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayer money has been spent,

and some of that money seems to have just disappeared into the desert

air. The costs keep climbing, and nobody, not a single Republican or

Democrat, can deny that.

The question before us now is clear: Should we escalate this war and

send 21,500 more of our sons and daughters to referee a civil war in

Iraq? The American people have spoken out for change, and many of us

here have listened carefully. But escalating this war does not reflect

the hard reality at home or on the ground in Iraq.

Saying ``support our troops'' is easy, but actually standing up for

our troops overseas and their families here at home demands so much

more from us. We must ask the tough questions and provide real support,

instead of empty rhetoric.

Supporting our troops requires that we protect their bodies and lives

with the best armor available. Supporting our troops means equipping

them with the most reliable weapons and effective training. Supporting

our troops does not stop when they come home from the war. It is the

Nation's solemn obligation to care for those who have given so much.

Supporting our troops means we must ask ourselves the hard question,

should we send more of our sons and daughters into the constant

crossfire of Iraq's civil war? The answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, it comes down to supporting our troops. In addition to

the best armor, the proper respect and the right benefits, our troops

deserve the right plan. In fact, nothing matters more than the right

plan. Our heroic soldiers have done everything that we have asked them

to do. Without a realistic plan to guide them, we cannot say that we

are supporting our troops.

While sacrificing health care for children and pharmaceutical needs

for our seniors, this administration has shipped 363 tons of cash on

pallets to Iraq. When it got there, the American officials turned it

over to Iraqis, without any idea of where they were spending it or what

they were doing with it. That defies common sense. It should not be a

surprise that nearly $9 billion are missing.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the costs keep climbing. As high as the cost is

in dollars, it pales compared to the high price many of our military

families have had to pay. Our troops are over-stretched, their families

are overstressed, and there is no relief in sight. Every one of our

active duty military brigades have served at least a year long in Iraq

or Afghanistan. When a mother or father or husband or wife is abroad

for a year, it places tremendous strain on the family. Too many

families have been torn apart by this war. The cost of broken families

will never be entered into an accountant's ledger, but the cost is too

high, and it just keeps climbing.

This month, one young man from my district was killed in Iraq. I know

that this country will feel his loss. He left behind his parents, his

wife and an infant son, Mr. Speaker, that he never had a chance to

meet. I feel their loss deeply, and I ask all of my colleagues to

remember that every man and woman that has been killed in Iraq cannot

be replaced and leaves behind many people who depended on them.

The resolution before us today could not be any more clear. It states

that the Congress will continue to support and protect our troops. I

will never vote for any legislation that will endanger our troops in

the field, and we will never vote to cut off funding that will help to

compromise the safety of our men and women in uniform. But escalating

this war and sending 21,500 more troops to referee a civil war is not

the answer.

The American people have spoken and they demand that we support our

troops with a real change in direction. As the voice of the people,

Congress will make sure that this administration finally takes notice.