Mr. Speaker, 3 months ago, the American people sent a

resounding message, a message for change. They voted for a new

direction in our Nation, including a new direction for the war in Iraq,

which will enter its fifth year next month.

This week on this House floor the Members of this great body can

demonstrate that we not only have heard the voters' message, but also

that we have the collective will to send one of our own.

The bipartisan resolution before us asks the Members one

straightforward question to be answered. Do you approve of the

President's proposal to deploy more than 20,000 additional troops in

Iraq, or do you not? Thus, this resolution is a clarifying moment for

the Members to say precisely where they stand on the President's plan.

There is little doubt that our Iraq policy is not succeeding. Our

Commander in Chief, President Bush, acknowledged on this floor last

month during his State of the Union address that, and I quote,

``Whatever you voted for, you did not vote for failure.''

I voted for the authorization, and I did not vote for failure. But

the policies being pursued by this administration have not led to

success.

After nearly 4 years at war, after more than 3,100 of our finest sons

and daughters have given the ultimate measure of sacrifice in Iraq,

after more than 25,000 have been wounded, after the expenditure of more

than $400 billion on this war effort by the American taxpayer, our

success seems as remote as ever.

Not surprisingly, two-thirds of the American people oppose the

President's escalation plan. So do many current and former senior

military officials, and Prime Minister Maliki has expressed his

disapproval as well.

I oppose the President's plan for several reasons. First, we simply

cannot ignore the many miscalculations made by the administration about

this war, from sending too few troops, to grossly underestimating the

cost, to failing to properly plan for the postwar period.

The President repeatedly said that his policies were working. He was

tragically wrong, just as he is wrong today, in my view, about this

escalation.

Secondly, this troop escalation does not represent a new strategy. In

fact, we have tried at least four escalations in the past, none of

which has succeeded in quelling violence.

The time for more troops was 4 years ago, 3 years ago, perhaps even 2

years ago, but not today.

The fact is our commitment of forces has never, has never been

commensurate with the risk the President says exists. Never has the

President, the Commander in Chief, suggested the resources necessary to

succeed. This is too little, tragically, too late.

Third, we cannot disregard the deep skepticism and warnings of our

military leaders. General Abizaid, not just another soldier, but the

former chief of the Central Command in charge of our effort in Iraq,

has stated that, and I quote, ``More American forces prevent the Iraqis

from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own

future.'' That is the consequence General Abizaid believes of the

President's policy.

Former Secretary of State Powell, one of the military leaders so

successful in Iraq I, stated, and I quote again,

``I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the

purposes of suppressing the communitarian violence, this civil war,

will work.'' That is General Powell.

And even Senator McCain, who supports the President's escalation

nonetheless, said just last week, ``I don't think it enhances our

chances for succeeding in Iraq.''

It is obvious that there is not a military solution to the violence

in Iraq. We need a diplomatic surge, a surge of Iraqi responsibility.

We must implement an aggressive diplomatic strategy, as suggested by

our friend, Frank Wolf, both within the region and beyond. The Iraqis

must take the lead on security, and the mission of American forces must

shift from combat to counterterrorism, training and logistics. And we

must begin the responsible redeployment of our forces.

Now, let me close by urging Members to disregard the arguments of

those who seek to mischaracterize this resolution. Some say that the

resolution will demoralize our troops. In a democracy it is proper and

essential that we debate the tactics and strategy we are employing when

we are asking young Americans, and some not so young Americans, to be

at the point of the spear. It is easy for us to talk about tactics and

strategy, not so easy for those who are in harm's way.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace, says this

debate will not adversely affect morale if we make it clear, as we have

made it clear over and over and over again, that we will not abandon,

we will not underman, we will not undersupply, we will not undertrain,

and we will not defund those who we have put in harm's way. We will

support our troops today, tomorrow and every day thereafter.

Some say that this resolution will demoralize our troops. Yet General

Pace, as I said, says otherwise.

Others say that this resolution has not received adequate

consideration. Yet, I tell my friends, in the first 6 weeks of this new

Congress, we have held 52 House and Senate hearings. For the last 4

years this Congress has been absent without leave, and the American

people know it. We did not demand accountability. We did not look at

strategy. We did not question the President's policies. Fifty-two

hearings have been held to date, and Chairman Lantos has announced that

he will hold a full committee hearing on all pending resolutions

related to Iraq when we come back from the President's Day break.

Some say that this resolution is merely symbolic. To them I simply

state that the bipartisan expression of the will of this House, when it

mirrors the views of the vast majority of the American public, cannot,

must not, should not be casually ignored.

Some say that this resolution signals retreat in the war on terror.

As one who is absolutely committed to prevailing in the war on terror,

to protect our people, to protect our country and, yes, to protect my

three daughters, my three grandchildren, and my great grandchild, I am

absolutely committed to policies that will protect us from terror and

defeat those terrorists who threaten us. Continuing to support failed

strategy, however, weakens our efforts in the war on terror. It does

not strengthen them.

Furthermore, our failure to implement an effective strategy in Iraq

has clearly, indisputably, resulted in encouraging and enhancing the

ability of terrorists to recruit and to spread their twisted, hateful,

violent ideology.

Finally, my colleagues, some assert that this resolution is a first

step to defunding our troops in the field. This is categorically false.

While the new majority will explore other opportunities to affect

Iraq policy, our commitment to our men and women in harm's way is

unwavering.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a Member of this body, not one, on either

side of the aisle, who does not pray for our Nation's success in Iraq.

Our brave service men and women have performed there with valor and

with great honor. They have done everything that a grateful Nation has

asked of them since the beginning of this war. We will not abandon

them. I say to them directly, we will not abandon you. We will support

you and we will assure that you are trained and equipped for the

mission that we give you.

This is a critical moment, I tell you, my colleagues, in our Nation's

war effort in Iraq. The President's policy is failing and his most

recent proposal promises more of the same. This resolution is a first

step in our attempt to forge a new direction in Iraq, and I urge every

Member to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding. I was

watching this debate from my office, and I was constrained to come to

the floor.

There are legitimate issues raised by this resolution as to whether

or not you support or do not support the escalation that has been

proposed by the President. But no one ought to hide behind the troops.

No one ought to come to this floor and say that this Congress, 435 of

us, will not support whatever soldier or sailor or marine is deployed

to Iraq. Whether it is today or tomorrow, they will have our support.

And when we say in this resolution they are serving, it means if they

are serving, if the Commander in Chief has sent them there, we will

support them.

And very frankly, for my friend from New Mexico to come to this floor

and make the representation that somehow we have limited that support

to those who currently are on the ground is not an honest

representation, in my opinion.

There are those of us who disagree as to what supporting the troops

means. My friend, the former chairman of the committee, just got up and

said he has not gotten any calls lately, but we got a lot of calls in

in 2003 and 2004 and 2005. And today, Chairman Murtha of the

Appropriations Committee is saying we do not have the armored Humvees

for these new troops that are going to be deployed or in the process of

being deployed.

So when you come to the floor, my friends, debate the substance of

this policy, but do not hide behind the troops, do not assert that

anybody on this floor does not have every intention and commitment to

supporting to whatever degree necessary our young men and women and, as

I have said, some not so young, who are deployed in harm's way at the

point of the spear. Because no one in this Congress, and our troops

ought to know, that no one in this Congress will not support them when

they are deployed at the point of the spear.

I thank the gentleman for his observation. I am not sure

the gentleman and I agree. I am not an expert in this area; I do not

serve on the subcommittee or the committee. But the information that I

have is that the troops that we sent in 2003 and 2004 on the ground did

not have sufficient quantities of body armor for each one of them. Now,

that may be inaccurate, and if the gentleman thinks that assertion is

inaccurate I would be glad to yield.

Reclaiming my time, is the gentleman asserting that all of

the troops who were in Humvees in 2003 and 2004 had armored Humvees or

that they had all of the troops deployed in harm's way, and, by the

way, being in Iraq is in harm's way wherever they may be, had

sufficient body armor? Is that what the gentleman is asserting?

I thank the gentleman for his observation. But, of course,

my assertion was not 1776 to 2000; it was 2003 and 2004.

But the point that I will make, and if I can conclude, Mr. Chairman,

I appreciate the time. The point that I wanted to make, though, is

irrespective of that assertion one way or the other, I believe every

one of our colleagues, whatever their view on this resolution might be,

all 435 have every intention and will in fact do whatever they need to

protect and promote the safety of our men and women in harm's way. And

the assertion, I tell my friend, that was made by the gentlewoman from

New Mexico that the verbiage of this resolution says, because serving,

it does not mean those who will serve, obviously, as soon as they are

sent into theater, they are serving in Iraq and they are covered by

this resolution. There ought to be no confusion on that issue by

anybody on the floor or anybody who might be listening to this debate.

Reclaiming my time, I am glad that it is good news. I will

repeat: No one in this Congress, not Chairman Skelton or Chairman

Murtha or any Member on this side, will take any action that will put

at risk the men and women whom we have placed at the point of the spear

in harm's way. I make that representation to you, that assertion, and I

make it as strongly as I can possibly make it.

This is about a policy, a policy as to whether or not we ought to

send 21,000 additional people. And as the gentlewoman from New Mexico

said she herself has great reservations about that policy, but

rationalizes voting against the resolution which opposes that policy on

an assertion that I think was not correct. And if she wanted that

clarification, I am glad that I could give it to her. I thank the

gentleman. I thank the gentleman for yielding.