Mr. Speaker, on Sunday afternoon, I drove about 20 miles

to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Balint in Willow Park, Texas. I had

the solemn honor of presenting them with congressional remarks

commemorating the noble and distinguished service of their son, Paulie.

The parents of Captain Balint did not complain to me or ask me to

vote to end the war. They talked about the pride of their son and his

lifetime desire to serve in the military.

The Balints have never waffled in their belief that the war in Iraq

is one that demands our Nation's full commitment. They experienced a

loss no one ever wants to share. Paulie was fighting to preserve our

freedom and our way of life.

As I wished them well and turned to leave, the Balints asked me to

bring a message back to Washington. They said to tell you to stay firm

because we need to finish the job in Iraq.

So I am speaking today in memory of Paulie and his mother and his

father and his brother and those who are still fighting there for us

and listening to what we have to say.

I will not speak by calling into question anyone's patriotism or

motives. All of us, Republicans and Democrats alike, recognize that

much is at stake in Iraq and, undoubtedly, we all feel passionately

about doing our duty to move forward and address what I consider to be

the issue of our lives, the worldwide war against terrorists and a

battleground of that war, which is Iraq.

The issue of responsibility in this war has been discussed during

this debate, and I believe it is an important issue when addressing

Iraq and in addressing this resolution.

Certainly in the change of direction the President has presented, the

Iraqis have a clear responsibility to meet the goals of securing their

own future. Likewise, Congress has a clear responsibility to produce

meaningful legislation and provide effective oversight of our

government's actions, especially during time of war.

Put another way, our citizens hold their elected Representatives

accountable to craft legislation that results in meaningful and

positive change. That is precisely what is so disappointingly

unacceptable about this nonbinding bill, which fails to do anything,

which holds no one accountable, and does not move our country forward

on this critical issue.

Frankly, those many who have criticized the administration for

staying the course too long are now presenting us with a bill that is

the ``stay the course'' piece of legislation that both advocates

failure and a position of status quo. More specifically, the bill

ignores two of the most important parts of our Nation's role in Iraq:

the consequences of failure and the principal support that we should

provide our troops during times of war.

Let us say we do redeploy, which means quit. Or let us say the

Congress takes the next step that is being talked about, and that is

stopping the funding in Iraq. Let us look clearly at the consequences

of a failed state in Iraq, not only for America but for the world.

Let there be no mistake, Iraq is but one front in a long war against

a fanatical enemy who does not value human life and who seeks to

destroy those who do. Failing to secure Iraq will result in massive

instability in the Middle East, which will undoubtedly spill over to

the rest of the world.

Consider the fractured nature of the Middle East and the nature of

the dangerous threat we face. Iranian television stations routinely

broadcast commercials that are designed to recruit would-be terrorists.

In one ad specifically for children, cartoon characters entice them to

be suicide bombers. Imagine a society that views indoctrinating 10-

year-olds in the joys of

martyrdom as a positive action. And yet that is precisely the kind of

hate-filled enemy we face in this war, where again Iraq is just one

battle.

A failed Iraq would provide international terrorists fertile ground

to sow the seeds of just that type of hatred and extremist thought.

These terror groups are cold and brutal and fully dedicated to our

destruction.

In a failed Iraq, terror organizations would exploit a populace who

is distrustful of Western democracies, who have turned their backs on

them. These people would be ripe for terrorist recruitment

Just yesterday, many of us met with the ambassadors of Jordan and

Egypt who warned us of the consequences should we take the next steps

that have been hinted at during this debate and meetings held in

congressional offices. America cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of

the past by withdrawal from a direct confrontation with radical

terrorists. Should we retreat from the current fight, the enemy will

continue to intensify their attacks against America, just as they did

following the 1983 bombings of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the first

World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the 1996 attack on the Khobar

Towers in Saudi Arabia, the U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa in 1997,

and the brazen attack against USS Cole in 2000.

Many of the speakers on this resolution have cited the widely

accepted Iraq Study Group report, which pointed to the dire

consequences that America, indeed the world, would face should we fail

in Iraq. What they choose to ignore is that the bipartisan authors of

this report stipulated that they would agree with a short-term surge of

American forces to bolster security and train Iraqi forces, which is

precisely what our new strategy does.

Two weeks ago, the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq was

published, and it largely concurred with the findings of the study

group of the results that failure in Iraq would bring.

Retreat from Iraq would result in pervasive instability in the Middle

East, encourage rogue regimes, and give terrorists a secure base from

which to launch attacks against free nations everywhere.

No one disagrees that the situation in Iraq has become more

dangerous, but let me be perfectly clear. The consequences of failure

in this fight would be catastrophic not only for America, but for the

entire world.

While this war is certainly a test of our resolve, America has faced

tough decisions during critical war years in the past. In 1862 debate

over the Civil War threatened the success of the campaigns that our

troops were engaged in. During the opening days of World War II, while

the troops were engaged in a fight for their lives in the Pacific,

Congress bickered over strategies of isolationism based in fear. And

now in 2007, we find ourselves in the fight of our generation.

With all my heart I believe we stand at a crucial crossroad where the

decision we make will affect not just us, but our children and their

children and generations to come. Our enemies have demonstrated that

they are willing to kill us even if they have to die themselves.

Thankfully, our servicemen and women are willing to bravely defend our

freedom as we in Congress go through the semantics of debating a

nonbinding resolution.

For this reason and all the other reasons I have outlined today, I

will not support a resolution that sends anything less than a clear

message of support for our troops who are deployed in harm's way.

Senator Joe Lieberman stated last week in the Senate, ``This bill is a

resolution of irresolution.''

If you believe the President's new strategy is unsound, then offer a

better solution to win. If that is where your convictions lie, then

have the courage to act decisively and be ready to accept the

consequences of your convictions. Now, that would be a resolution.

The nonbinding resolution before us is at best confusing, at worst

immoral. It pledges to support the troops in the field but washes its

hands of what they are doing. We can't have it both ways. We can't say

that our military men and women have our full support while

disapproving of their mission on the eve of their battle. The bill does

not resolve to do anything. It doesn't offer a solution. It only offers

political expedient top-cover. It would be nice to play the game of

nonbinding actions, but our soldiers and marines in Iraq don't have

that option, and neither should we. In fact, if the troops in Iraq

cared to watch what we were doing in Congress this week, they would be

outraged. Fortunately for us, they have more important things to do and

they live in a world where bullets are real and words alone carry

little meaning.

I will close by asking all of you to picture yourselves as an 18- or

19-year-old marine or soldier who is preparing for imminent battle in

Baghdad. At this very moment, you would be fueling your Humvee; loading

your ammunition, checking your gear and equipment; taking time out to

pray a private, quiet prayer. And if you are lucky, you might be able

to call family and friends to tell them how much you love them. And all

the while, the back of your hair is standing up and the back of your

neck is itching because the support that you feel that is necessary

from your government is lacking. As you prepare for battle, the best

that your elected Representatives back home in your Nation's Capital

can do is to debate a nonbinding resolution that has no real

significance, except to call into question the mission you are about to

embark on.

Quit? Unthinkable. Stop the funding while they are fighting? Immoral.

Stay the course and do nothing? Outrageous.

What the Nation and our troops deserve is our best thinking and our

best support.