Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for

yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 63.

Despite the brave efforts of our troops, the situation in Iraq

continues to deteriorate. Our troops have gone above and beyond the

call of duty. Unfortunately, they are caught in the middle of sectarian

violence.

From the onset of the conflict, there has been mismanagement and

mishandling from this administration. The administration was not

prepared for the violence following the removal of Saddam Hussein.

In addition, the previous Congress did not do its job. The 110th

Congress held the first oversight hearing since the invasion in 2003.

That is 4 years without any congressional oversight.

I have heard so many speeches here saying that we support the troops.

I think everyone, every single Member, supports the troops. Yet all

those years that we were hearing from the families and from our

soldiers themselves, saying they did not have the equipment, they did

not have certainly the equipment to keep them safe, where were we?

Where were we as Members in making sure that our military had the best

equipment?

Since January, we have had 52 oversight hearings on Iraq. It turns

out that nearly $12 billion from the American taxpayers have not been

accounted for. That is $12 billion that could have been spent on our

equipment to protect our troops. Our troops deserve better.

The President explained his new plan for Iraq last month. Again, I

hear that we must stand by the President. Well, I was one that stood by

the President. I voted with the President. I voted for every

appropriation for the President, and now he is doing the same thing. It

is not working. It has not worked. It is time for a new plan.

He called for an increase of 20,000 more troops in Iraq and,

unfortunately, I am afraid that this is a little bit too late. We

needed hundreds of thousands of troops in the beginning. That is when

the generals asked for those troops and they were denied.

The truth of the matter is we did this war on the cheap. We did not

do it right in the beginning, and now we are all paying the

consequences.

Throughout the conflict our troop levels have changed. We have sent

more troops in when our generals called for them. Then they were made

smaller. To no fault of our troops, the extra numbers did not calm the

situation. I do not believe that putting more of our brave men and

women in harm's way is the solution to this conflict.

President Bush emphasized his intentions of placing more authority

and responsibility on the Iraqi Government. Well, it is about time. We

have spent a lot of money to train the police officers, to train their

military, and yet they are not standing up for their own country.

Prime Minister Maliki has not proven that he can stop the violence

that is going on in his country. That should not mean that our troops

should be there. Our troops are trained for a war, not to settle

political differences in that country. He has failed to bring equal

representations of the Sunnis and the Shiites into the Iraqi

Government. This shortfall has fueled sectarian violence, putting our

troops in greater harm.

Poor planning by civilian leaders within the administration has

placed our brave men and women in harm's way. Our troops have gone

above and beyond the call of duty. They have served our country bravely

and honorably, and we all know that. Many of these troops have served

their full tours of duty in Iraq, and they have left behind family and

friends to defend this great Nation.

More than 3,000 of our men and women have made the ultimate

sacrifice, and not one of them, in my opinion, has died in vain because

they were doing their duty. We sent them there, and they have lived up

to that, and thousands more have suffered debilitating injuries.

It is time to shift the burden of this conflict to the Iraqis

themselves. We have a responsibility in Congress to make sure that our

troops are not put unnecessarily in harm's way.

President Bush has made his decisions without consulting enough

experts and retired generals. Where was all the information that we

needed years ago as far as bringing the experts, knowing what the

culture was in the Middle East? That is something that we still are not

addressing here.

Decisions have not been clearly thought out and our troops have paid

the price. And after much thought, I have come to the conclusion that a

phased redeployment of our troops is the best option.

No one is really talking about Afghanistan either. When we started,

we were winning in Afghanistan. When we took those troops out of

Afghanistan, we started seeing the insurgents coming in. We can put our

troops along the borders. We can stop the insurgents coming into Iraq

while the Iraqi Government tries to solve their own problems.

We can go back into Afghanistan and make sure that we shore up that

country so more insurgents and military equipment are not coming from

that country.

We must show the American people and our allies, by the way, who are

leaving, they are not supporting us, it is not just Democrats and a lot

of our Republican colleagues that feel that we should get out. Our

strategy has been wrong, it is time to work together, and I am hoping

after all these debates, when we come back from our break, we can

actually go to our committees and come up with a way to solve these

problems, not only for America, but before the world.