Mr. Speaker, I have listened to much of the debate

yesterday and today, and I appreciate the efforts of my colleague from

Michigan to remind and educate us all about what is at stake for our

security and how Iraq fits into the larger war against radical Islamic

terrorists. That is serious work.

Unfortunately, this resolution is not serious work. I believe we have

to start by asking a basic essential question: Why are we doing this?

What is the purpose of this resolution? What good will come from

passing it? I cannot find an acceptable answer.

The struggle in Iraq and the larger war against radical Islamic

terrorists is, in my view, the preeminent national security issue

facing our country. It is important for Congress to devote serious,

meaningful attention to it. But whatever we do should have a purpose, a

purpose that makes the United States stronger, a purpose that will help

us be successful, a purpose we can explain and be proud of in years to

come.

Here we have a nonbinding resolution, which means it does not have

the force of law. It conveys an opinion. Now, we do that from time to

time. We congratulate a sports team, we express concern about curing a

disease, we pat somebody on the back. We do express opinions.

What is the opinion in this resolution? It is that we support the

troops, but we do not support their mission. We support the troops, but

we do not support their new commander, who is this Nation's preeminent

strategist and expert on counterinsurgency, who just wrote the manual

for counterinsurgency, who was just approved by the Senate unanimously.

We support the troops, but we don't support him or her or what he is

trying to do. Now, what is the purpose of expressing that kind of self-

contradictory opinion?

And I continue to be troubled when I think, when in the history of

the United States has Congress passed a resolution expressing an

opinion on a battlefield strategy for an ongoing operation that

Congress has approved? It is like June 13, 1944, D-Day plus seven:

Congress passes a resolution that says, ``We support the troops, but

Eisenhower should never have landed in Normandy. And, besides, he

doesn't have the right number of people to hit those beaches anyway.''

Mr. Speaker, I can only conclude that this resolution is more about

political posturing than it is about anything else, and I think every

American ought to be saddened and disappointed by it. We have a

spectacle going on in this country where a group of people running for

President try to outdo one another to see who can be the most against

our involvement in Iraq. Now we come to add to that spectacle with a

nonbinding contrary resolution.

Just put yourself in the shoes of those men and women going into

battle in Baghdad. Does this resolution encourage you or discourage

you? Put yourself in the shoes of those people who do not want

stability in Iraq, our adversaries. Does this resolution encourage you

or discourage you? Put yourself in the shoes of those families like Ms.

Granger, just visited, or the Britt family in Wheeler, Texas, or the

Das family in Amarillo, Texas who have lost their sons in this effort.

Does this resolution encourage you, or does it discourage you? Who is

helped by this resolution?

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be misunderstood; mistakes have clearly

been made with regard to our involvement in Iraq, and Members should be

part of a serious study to learn from them. There are a good many

questions that need to be asked, and there is very good reason for

skepticism that this new strategy is really going to work. We should

ask those questions. We should hold Iraqis accountable for doing what

they say they are going to do. I know there are some people who say we

don't need to ask any more questions, they have already made up their

mind; they are ready to vote to leave today. Fine, let's vote on that.

It is a serious vote, with consequences, and people that vote that way

ought to be ready to shoulder the responsibility for the consequences

that come from that sort of vote.

But this resolution is not serious, it is just political posturing,

pure and simple.

Mr. Speaker, this struggle is going to require the best of us for

years and possibly decades to come. It will require that we put aside

the political temptations to get a momentary partisan advantage. It

requires that we do our constitutional duty not to be a rubber stamp to

any administration, but to be an independent branch of government

committed to serious, thoughtful work.

To prevail over these radical Islamic terrorists and protect our

people, we are going to have to bring the full array of national

assets. Yes, our military, but also our diplomats and our

foreign assistants and our ideas and our ideals. All of that is going

to have to be at our best. But it is going to require the best of us,

too, and we are not giving our best with this resolution. Hopefully, we

can do better.