I thank the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose deploying 20,000 additional troops to Iraq. Oh,

if you oppose the surge, the troops will be demoralized, we are told.

The five ``d'' words will be prominently exposed this week as my friend

just mentioned: debate, dialogue, discipline, deliberation, and

democracy.

The troop morale will be adversely affected because we are involved

with these disciplines? I think not. I believe they would more readily

be demoralized if we were willy-nilly rubber-stamping every issue

confronting us.

I approved of removing Saddam Hussein because it is my belief, and I

continue to believe it is the general consensus of this Congress, that

Saddam was indeed an international terrorist. I regret that we were

inept in formulating a post-entry strategy. I am not convinced that any

particular strategy was ever in place.

It is unfortunate and, yes, unfair, that many people, strike that,

some people, perhaps many people, are blaming President Bush, the

United States, Great Britain, Australia, and our other allies for the

civil unrest in Iraq. Saddam was removed and a free election was

conducted, so the Iraqi people were given a choice between freedom and

civil war. Unfortunately, they chose the latter. They rejected freedom

and chose civil war. And the longer we maintain a presence there, the

more they will rely upon us. The time has come, in my opinion, for the

baton to be handed to the Iraqis.

Finally, permit me to discuss cutting and running. Oh, you cannot

leave; you will be accused of cutting and running, we are told. If we

had removed Saddam, which most Iraqis wanted, and then withdrew 4 or 5

weeks later, or even 4 or 5 months later, that would have constituted

cutting and running. But we have been there for years, Mr. Speaker.

Over 3,100 of our troops have given the ultimate sacrifice, in excess

of 25,000 have suffered injuries, many permanent disabling injuries.

This is sacrifice, not cutting and running. And I insist that we do not

maintain an eternal presence in Iraq if for no other reason than the

cost to the taxpayers, which has been astronomically unbelievable.

In excess of 2 years, Mr. Speaker, I have stressed the importance of

retaining troop withdrawal as a viable option. Early on, virtually no

one was even remotely considering withdrawal. I believe withdrawal is

not unsound for the reasons I have previously cited.

Some Americans and perhaps some in this body oppose the Iraqi

operation because they dislike President Bush. I, however, do not march

to that drum. I am personally very high on President Bush. But on the

matter of troop escalation, I am not in agreement.

The noted British statesman Edmund Burke, while addressing Solicitors

at Bristol many years ago said, ``As your representative, I owe you my

industry, but I also owe you my judgment. And if I sacrifice my

judgment for your opinion,'' he said, ``I have not served you well.''

Some of my constituents will embrace my vote as demonstrating sound

judgment. Others will likely reject my vote as a result of flawed

judgment.

Not only do I owe my best judgment to my constituents, but to our

troops as well, who we continue to remember in our thoughts and

prayers.

I thank the Speaker and I thank the distinguished gentleman from

North Carolina.