Mr. Speaker, the Iraq war is the central issue

of our time. We are spending $2 billion a week and we are losing 100

American lives a month. Under these conditions, I feel I owe my

constituents my best judgment.

Interjecting more young American troops into the cross-hairs of an

Iraqi civil war is simply not the right approach. If the President

sends these troops anyway, I will support their funding 100 percent so

they have the bullets and equipment they need to defend themselves.

I approach this decision with a great deal of angst and humility. I

am not trying to micromanage this war. I am just a Member of Congress,

not a four-star general. But I have listened to what our country's most

well-respected four-star generals have to say about this matter, and

Generals Abizaid, McCaffrey and Colin Powell have all said that sending

more troops into Baghdad now is not the answer.

Some people will say, if you are not for surging more American troops

into Baghdad now, what are you for? What is your plan?

I am for a different kind of surge. I am for a surge of Iraqi troops

to take out al-Sadr and his militia, especially since the Iraqi

security forces outnumber the Sadr militia by a ratio of 5 to 1. That

is 325,000 versus 60,000. I am for a surge of political process by the

Iraqi Government to finally reach a deal on sharing oil revenue. I am

for a surge of action in implementing the Iraq Study Group

recommendations, which were adopted in a bipartisan, unanimous fashion.

I am for a surge of gratitude by the Iraqi people, 61 percent of whom

think it is okay to kill American troops and 79 percent have a mostly

negative view of the United States.

Some people argue that we should support President Bush's decision. I

like and respect President Bush. I want him to be successful. Three

years ago I could have voted for this surge. But the situation on the

ground in Iraq today is very different than it was 3 years ago.

Three years ago, Iraq was not in a civil war. Now it is. Three years

ago, Iraq did not have 325,000 of its own security forces to defend

itself. Now it does. Three years ago, we didn't know whether surging

more American troops into Baghdad would give us a long-lasting impact.

Now we know the answer, because we tried the same thing last summer.

The benefits were temporary. The body bags were permanent.

We are now told we should trust the Maliki government. I have been

down that road before. I personally went to Baghdad and met with the

Maliki government officials last summer. I was told by December of 2006

they would have enough security forces that they would need to defend

themselves and we would then be in a position to start bringing our

troops home. Now they say, give us another year.

We were told when America sent 15,000 of its own troops to surge in

Baghdad last summer that the Iraqi troops would be right there beside

them. Well, Iraqi troops didn't show up. The benefits of the surge were

only temporary.

Mr. Speaker, I voted to authorize the use of force in 2002 because I

did not want Saddam Hussein to give weapons of mass destruction to al

Qaeda. Now Saddam is dead and there are no weapons of mass destruction

in Iraq.

We have remained in Iraq for 4 years because we want a unified and

secure Iraq, so it doesn't become a haven for terrorists.

Unfortunately, it seems the Americans want a unified and secure Iraq

more than the Iraqis do.

Let me give you an analogy. Imagine your next-door neighbor refuses

to mow his lawn and the weeds are all the way up to his waist. You

decide you are going to mow his lawn for him every single week. The

neighbor never says thank you, he hates you, and sometimes he takes out

a gun and shoots at you. Under these circumstances, do you keep mowing

his lawn forever? Do you send even more of your family members over to

mow his lawn? Or do you say to that neighbor, you better step it up and

mow your own lawn, or there are going to be serious consequences for

you.

Mr. Speaker, sending more young American troops now into the middle

of Iraqi civil war violence is not the answer. I will support the

troops 100 percent. But we are not going to solve an Iraqi political

problem with an American military solution. And that is my best

judgment.

May God bless our troops, our President and our country.