Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments, I must admit that it seems

that our friends from across the aisle have forgotten what the subject

of this debate remains. I was under the impression that we were here to

debate a resolution opposing the President's so-called surge plan. Yet

I keep hearing commentary that appears to be designed to distract the

American public from the real reason that we are gathered for a

conversation on our future involvement in Iraq.

Let it be known, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes time to vote, Hank

Johnson will be voting in favor of House Concurrent Resolution 63.

Now, ``help is on the way.'' Those were the watchwords of a former

Presidential campaign 7 years ago. Yet here we are, neck deep into the

second term of the Bush-Cheney administration. And when one considers

the current state of our military's readiness, our proud military's

readiness, one has to wonder, where has the help gone? Where is the

help?

If this was the help that was promised us 7 years ago, at the current

state of our readiness, I would be reluctant to see what not helping

our fine military men and women would mean.

I must point out that I, along with each of my colleagues in this

distinguished body, do support our troops. But the issue at hand is

whether, unlike campaign promises of the past, we intend to back our

rhetoric with action.

We are now engaged in a debate about committing more troops to what

can only be described as an ill-conceived, poorly planned, and

misguided attempt to bring some sort of stability to a region that has

suffered terribly since the President first decided to go it alone and

make his stamp upon history, for better or worse.

Although I must admit, it has even become difficult to remember the

exact reason the President used to justify his decision to take us to

war in Iraq; but allow me to briefly summarize for you the reasons that

the President has given the American public in his attempt to justify

his decision to go to war.

Number 1, weapons of mass destruction. There were none. Number 2, the

nuclear threat. There was none. Number 3, links to al Qaeda. There were

none. And yet now, when we debate the wisdom of sending more than

20,000 young men and women into battle in this so-called surge, we are

expected to trust an administration which has been so consistently

wrong. It is difficult to remember that we are in Iraq fighting for a

war whose justification has not yet been justified at all.

So at this point, when we look at the state of the readiness of our

military, it has been called into question. Recruiting, the Army has

failed to achieve its recruitment goals by 17.8 percent in 2006, and

moreover, recruitment quality has suffered. The percentage of Army

recruits with high school diplomas has declined. The above-average

middle category test scores of our recruits have declined, and the

number of recruits scoring in the lowest acceptable middle category has

increased. Our retention rates are soft.

We have got over 3,000 killed in Iraq, 20,000-plus wounded; meanwhile

we are having problems with our equipment shortfalls, which are glaring

in the combat theater, and also for our nondeployed personnel who are

in the process of training to be deployed to Iraq and who cannot be

properly trained without adequate equipment.

Then we have got the issue of multiple deployments, people having

been deployed three and even four times to the theater, but yet this

President proposes to send an additional 22,000 troops, plus support

personnel, into this civil war in Iraq, where we are simply sitting

ducks and falling victim to ever more sophisticated improvised

explosive devices, i.e., roadside bombs.

This killing is continuing at exorbitant rates, and so this is what

we are here to talk about with this resolution. It is important for the

American public to know that we support our military. We definitely

want to see them do the job that they must do. However, this troop

surge is wrong. Two wrongs do not make a right.