Mr. Speaker, today we are here, exactly 100 days after

a historic watershed election in this country, in which the American

people spoke loudly and clearly that they wanted a new Congress to rise

to its constitutional duty and hold this administration accountable for

its war policy in Iraq. The day I was sworn in as a new Member of

Congress, I accepted this responsibility, and I rise today in

opposition to the President's escalation of the war and in support of

H. Con. Res. 63.

Make no mistake about the significance of what is happening this

week. America's new Congress will go on record for the first time in

opposition to the Bush administration's 4-year legacy of mistakes and

misjudgments in Iraq. This will be in sharp contrast to 8 months ago

when the prior Congress did exactly the opposite. That Congress lined

up in lockstep with a war resolution written by and for the White

House.

That resolution completely brushed over the misleading and

manipulated intelligence that got us into this conflict, the strain of

this war on our brave men and women in uniform, and the drain on our

Nation's military readiness that is undercutting critical efforts in

Afghanistan and our overall defense infrastructure. Instead of doing

their constitutional duty, the 109th Congress instead just rubber-

stamped the administration's rhetoric and failing policy.

Opponents of today's resolution are claiming that it will damage our

troop's morale. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I believe

the opposite is true.

Let us be very clear about where the 20,000 new troops will come

from. President Bush cannot simply dial 911 and 20,000 fresh new troops

appear. This escalation can only happen by extending the deployments of

soldiers already in Iraq, beyond their promised commitments, or

accelerating the arrival of preexisting rotations. Upon close

examination, it is clear that the impact of this surge lands squarely

on the backs of our men and women in uniform who have already borne an

unfair burden.

As we debate this resolution, there are nearly 1,900 men and women

from my State of Connecticut, including 962 from Connecticut's National

Guard, serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have all honored our

Nation with their service and sacrifice, and they have done all that

has been asked of them and more, and their families have shown awe-

inspiring strength in their absence.

Earlier this month, I was forwarded an e-mail from a constituent

serving in Iraq which demonstrates the consequences of these

unsustainable policies. In it he described how the morale in his unit

fell when they found out that their tour was being unexpectedly

extended another 4 months. He wrote:

``These guys have seen so much of the fighting here. To see the looks

on these soldiers' faces was heartbreaking. A lot of these guys had

plans made already with their loved ones, like weddings, trips, or

family that traveled from far away to see them get off that

plane. There are children that were all excited, holding signs they

made, waiting to see their fathers again only to have that shattered.

How much more can soldiers like this take? These guys deserve the right

to go home. They earned it.''

Letters like these demonstrate the real impact on our troops from the

President's policy. And they are reinforced by the testimony I have

heard at Armed Services. Over and over again, we have heard about the

deterioration of our military readiness caused by overdeployment of our

troops. Consider that today, as a result of the strain of the war, we

currently have no active duty or Reserve brigades considered combat-

ready in the Continental U.S., leaving our Nation dangerously

unprepared and vulnerable if needed to respond to other global threats

or domestic emergencies.

Despite the huge costs to our troops and our national defense, the

President has opted to aggravate the holes in our defense with a plan

to escalate the number of troops in Iraq. And for what?

Yesterday, I read the new classified National Intelligence Estimate

on Iraq. What I found in this report was the same as the unclassified

version that has been reported in the press; that we have a

deteriorating security situation in Iraq whose fundamental causes were

identified as political, not military. This finding completely

dovetails with the findings of the Iraq Study Group who came to the

exact same conclusion.

Instead of absorbing the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group

report and the National Intelligence Estimate and surging diplomacy and

political solutions, the President instead has opted to escalate the

war by sending 21,500 more troops into the middle of a violent

sectarian conflict.

Where are the plans to equitably divide oil revenue or revisit the

Iraqi Constitution which was left incomplete 2 years ago, or the push

to create a real power-sharing arrangement between the Shia and the

Sunni? Nowhere do we see any effort to get to the root causes of the

violence. Instead, the Bush plan is more of the same, asking our brave

troops to do the impossible, settling a sectarian conflict that goes

back centuries in time.

President Bush has made his choice. Now it is Congress' turn as a

coequal branch of government to make ours.

I firmly believe that the passage of this resolution will go down in

history as the first stirrings of life from a Congress that has been in

an Iraq stranglehold for 4 long years. It is an honor to be part of

this history on behalf of one of the districts that had the courage to

vote for change last November 100 days ago, and I will support

resolution 63.