Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your kindness.

The resolution that is being considered in the House of

Representatives today expresses a very clear message to the American

people that it is time to change the direction of our policy in Iraq.

The meetings and communications that I have had with people from the

Sixth Congressional District from the State of Washington have made it

clear that the people I represent want to hear from Congress. My

resolve in this is strengthened by the loss and grief I have heard from

families in my district whose loved ones have been lost or injured in

this conflict.

I also deplore the mistakes by this administration: failing to deploy

enough troops to stabilize Iraq, disbanding the Iraqi Army, failing to

provide jobs and economic restoration. Those are but a few.

It has been 4 years since U.S. and Coalition Forces invaded Iraq

based on what was faulty intelligence. The premise for our military

action against the Saddam Hussein government in Iraq was that he had

weapons of mass destruction, and even the President has now

acknowledged that this determination resulted from an incorrect

interpretation of intelligence information.

With more than 3,000 U.S. military personnel killed and thousands

more wounded, people across the Nation, including many Members of

Congress, are questioning our continued involvement very seriously and

very legitimately, especially since the President has now ignored the

advice we know he received from many senior military advisors and has

decided to increase the number of military troops deployed to Iraq. It

is time for this Congress to speak clearly and forcefully in opposition

to this escalation and in support of changing course in Iraq.

In this resolution we are clear that our determination that American

forces have accomplished everything they have been asked to do in Iraq

courageously and with the professionalism the Nation expects of the

best-trained and best-equipped military in the world. These troops have

not let us down, to be sure; but in many ways they have been let down

by a policy that ignores the reality of their situation, and by a

Commander in Chief whose only response to what is unmistakably a civil

war in Iraq is to place more American troops in harm's way while

sectarian violence plays out in the streets of Baghdad and other Iraqi

cities.

Day after day, U.S. service people are being killed and injured by

bullets and bombs traded by Shiite and Sunni zealots for reasons that

predated our involvement and which will likely endure long beyond the

time we finally leave Iraq.

For the past 4 years, I regret that the Republican leadership of

Congress has abdicated much of its oversight responsibility for the

Iraq war and its funding. To date, the Bush administration has not

adequately explained to Congress or the American people the reasons for

our continued military involvement in Iraq. In announcing his intention

to send more than 21,000 additional troops to Iraq, last month the

President said it is time for the Iraqi Government to act, to take

charge of their security and to begin to govern themselves.

What we in Congress are saying now is that we believe the Maliki

government in Iraq will be more apt to accomplish that goal if we do

not send more American troops into Baghdad and if we signal to Iraqis

that we are planning for a phased withdrawal from their country. That

is what we must do to change the policy that keeps our forces acting as

the local police officers on the streets of Baghdad, and to give the

Iraqi people greater incentive for taking charge so that our troops can

begin to come home. This was a view of the bipartisan Iraqi Study

Group, which pointed to a compromise recommendation calling for gradual

drawdown of U.S. troops from Iraq.

It is instructive to recall the views expressed by many of the

generals on the ground, including General Abizaid, General Casey,

General Petraeus, that this conflict cannot be won militarily; it will

require a political solution. That political solution requires the

involvement of other regional governments, including Syria and Iran.

All Americans, certainly every Member here in the House of

Representatives, wants the Iraqi Government to succeed and to become

the stable democracy we had hoped to achieve at the outset of our

involvement. None of us want Iraq to fall into chaos and to become a

haven for terrorists, including al Qaeda. But the current U.S. policy

and the proposed escalation of a number of American troops offers

little promise, I am convinced, of accomplishing those goals.

Even the recently completed National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq,

which the President presumably relies upon, concludes that the war, as

it is currently being prosecuted, will not or cannot bring about these

results. My colleague, Mr. Murtha, has also suggested that it will be

up to the Iraqi people themselves who will expel what remains of al

Qaeda in the country, and I believe there is merit in his argument.

This is an important debate, Mr. Speaker, and one that is perhaps

long overdue. We as a new Congress, led by a new Democratic leadership

team, must communicate that we are placing a firmer hand on the tiller

of this ship of state and that we are demanding greater accountability

for both the policy and funding of the Iraq war. This new direction

starts with a brief and declarative statement, that ``Congress

disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush announced on

January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States

combat troops to Iraq,'' but it must be followed by that harder task of

guiding our military policy through aggressive oversight and more

careful direction of our political and military leadership by all of

the relevant committees here in Congress.

That is our task ahead, Mr. Speaker, and as a member of the Defense

appropriations subcommittee, I am prepared to do my part.