Mr. Speaker, let me thank my colleague from Florida for

yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today we begin an extended debate on a resolution

criticizing the latest effort by American forces to win in Iraq.

There is no question that the war in Iraq has been difficult. All

Americans are frustrated that we haven't seen more success and that we

haven't seen it more quickly.

But war is never easy and almost never goes according to plan. Al

Qaeda and their supporters in the region have been steadfast in their

efforts to slow us down and frustrate our efforts to succeed. But

because they cannot defeat Americans on the battlefield, al Qaeda and

terrorist sympathizers around the world are trying to divide us here at

home.

Over the next few days, we have an opportunity to show our enemies

that we will not take the bait.

It is fitting that yesterday was President Abraham Lincoln's

birthday. And not since the dark days of the Civil War has our homeland

been a battlefield. Lincoln's leadership preserved the Union through a

turbulent age that threatened to undo the American experiment. His

belief in the promise of the United States, a promise enshrined in the

Declaration of Independence that stated for the first time in history

that all men are created equal, this is what drove him to pursue

victory.

Surrounded by personal and political rivals, Lincoln could have given

up. He could have recalled the Union forces and sent them home. But he

didn't.

I think we need a similar commitment to victory today.

The battle in Iraq is about more than what happens there. This is one

part of a much larger fight, a global fight against Islamic terrorists

who have waged war on the United States and our allies. This is not a

question of fighting for land or for treasure or for glory. We are

fighting to rid the world of a radical and dangerous ideology. We are

fighting to preserve and defend our sacred way of life. We are fighting

to build a safer and more secure America, one where families can rear

their children without the fear of terrorist attacks.

Lincoln famously said in 1858 that ``a house divided against itself

cannot stand.'' I believe, as Lincoln did then, that we must choose

sides on a very critical issue. Then it was whether we should abolish

the evil institution of slavery. Today it is whether we will defeat the

ideology that drives radical Islamic terrorism. Will we do what it

takes to stand and fight for the future of our kids and theirs? Will we

commit to defending the freedoms and liberties that we all cherish? Or

will we retreat and leave the fight for another generation? These are

the questions with historic implications that will be answered this

week.

Many of my friends across the aisle think this is exactly what we

should do, give up and leave. This nonbinding resolution is their first

step towards abandoning Iraq by cutting off funding for our troops that

are in harm's way.

And we know what al Qaeda thinks when America retreats from the

battlefield. They think that we can't stomach a fight. This is why they

haven't been afraid to strike us whenever and wherever they have had

the opportunity to do so.

This war didn't start in Iraq. This war didn't start on 9/11. The war

began with the Iran hostage taking in 1979, went on for well over a

year. Then on October 23, 1983, the suicide attack on our Marine

barracks in Beirut occurred, killing 241 American servicemen and

injuring 60 others. On February 26, 1993, was the first World Trade

Center bombing that killed six people and injured more than 1,000

others. On June 25, 1996, the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia were

bombed, killing 20 and injuring some 372 others. On June 7, 1998, the

Kenya embassy bombing killed 213 people and injured 5,000 more. And on

June 7, 1998, the Tanzania embassy bombing killed 11 people and 68

others were injured. On October 12, 2000, the USS Cole was attacked; 17

American sailors killed, 39 other sailors injured.

We all know what happened on September 11, 2001, when 3,000 Americans

died for no other reason than they were Americans.

Do we really believe that if we pack up now, if we abandon Iraq and

leave the country in chaos, that our enemies are just going to lay down

their arms and leave us alone?

For too long, world leaders responded to terrorism by retreating and

just hoping for the best. In a post-9/11 world, this is no longer an

option.

God forgive us that it took such a loss of life to open our eyes, but

our eyes are open. We are engaged in a global war now for our very way

of life.

Every drop of blood that has been spilt in defense of liberty and

freedom, from the American Revolution to this very moment, is for

nothing if we are unwilling to stand up and fight this threat.

We didn't start this war. They did. Now we have got a duty to finish

it, and, for the sake of our kids and theirs, to win it.

The nonbinding resolution before us today criticizes the new strategy

for succeeding in Iraq implemented by General Petraeus. It

``disapproves'' of the strategy before it even has a chance to begin.

The general's goal is to stabilize the Iraqi democracy, deny the

terrorists a safe haven and ensure stability in the region. It is a

prudent strategy that puts the performance of the Iraqi Government

front and center.

I can't guarantee that this plan is going to work. I hope it does.

Republicans have put forward a complementary bill aimed at helping it

succeed. But I again can guarantee you this: If we cut off our funding

for the troops that are in the field and we abandon Iraq, as many

supporters of this nonbinding resolution want to, the consequences of

our failure will be catastrophic.

Last year, Osama bin Laden issued this warning to the United States

regarding the war in Iraq. He said, ``I would like to tell you that the

war is for you or for us to win. If we win, it means your defeat and

disgrace forever.''

Now, think about this for a moment. Al Qaeda knows what the stakes

are and it issued all of us a challenge. Now, tell me, what message

does it send if we are afraid to meet that challenge? What message are

we sending to North Korea, Iran, Venezuela and other enemies of freedom

around the world? If we abandon Iraq, regional stability is going to be

jeopardized. Iraq will become a fertile breeding ground for radical

Islamic terrorists. Without a central government or other stabilizing

force, Iraq's neighbors will be compelled to enter Iraq to protect

their own interests. The consequences will be devastating and could

easily lead to regional war.

If we abandon Iraq, the instability, coupled with the damning image

of another American retreat, will embolden Iran and Islamic militants

and endanger Israel. Iran's leaders and terrorist groups have made it

clear of their intentions to wipe Israel off the map. We would be

leaving a staunch ally in the Middle East with nothing but chaos and

instability separating them from their greatest enemy.

If we abandon Iraq, those who seek weapons of mass destruction will

know they have nothing to fear from a fearful America. Neither al

Qaeda, North Korea or Iran are going to give up their quest for weapons

of mass destruction if they know they are free to pursue these weapons,

secure in the knowledge that America doesn't have the stomach to stop

them. We will be leaving for our children, and theirs, a vastly more

dangerous world.

During the Cold War, we took some small comfort in the idea of

mutually assured destruction, that the Soviet Union wouldn't attack us

because we could retaliate with equal devastation. There is no such

comfort in a world where terrorist gangs roam free. It is the nature of

our enemy to fight us wherever and whenever they can. Whether it is in

Asia, in Africa or elsewhere, al Qaeda has supporters and sympathizers

throughout the world. They have the ability to strike us at any time

with their lethal force across the globe.

Right now, we are fighting them in Iraq. The battlefield is the most

visible part in the global war against these terrorists, but it is but

one part. If we leave, they will just follow us home. It is as simple

as that. We cannot negotiate with them. We can't reason with them. Our

one and only option is to defeat them. And this nonbinding measure

before us today will only embolden them.

Now, it is important for this body to debate the important issues of

our day. Last summer, the House held an extended debate on the war in

Iraq and the global war on terror which gave all Members an opportunity

to go on record. We worked closely with our colleagues on the other

side of the aisle to draft the language of that resolution, and I

believe that we had a productive debate.

What we are dealing with here today isn't even a resolution to debate

the war itself. It is a nonbinding resolution attacking a single

strategy in the prosecution of a much larger war. ``Nonbinding'' means

nonleadership. It is not accountable, and I don't think it is the right

message for our troops.

This is a political charade, lacking both the seriousness and the

gravity of the issue that it is meant to represent. And, as I said

before, the question before us today isn't actually in this resolution.

I think it is much more fundamental. The question is, do we have the

resolve necessary to defeat our terrorist enemies? Will we stand and

fight for the future of our kids and theirs?

As President Eisenhower once said, ``History does not long entrust

the care of freedom to the weak or the timid.'' Does Congress have the

fortitude to do what needs to be done? Our soldiers do. The men and

women of our military are the greatest force for freedom that the world

has ever known. They are brave, they are committed and they can win

this fight if we ask them to. I think the big question is, will we

support them?

My colleagues, the world is watching. The question is, how will we

respond