Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, chairman of the

House Armed Services Committee, Mr. Skelton, for giving me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my fellow veterans to express strong

opposition to sending more than 20,000 additional United States troops

to Iraq, and I rise in strong support of the underlying resolution that

we are debating today.

Mr. Speaker, when thinking about our political and military situation

in Iraq, I often reflect on my own service in Vietnam and my thoughts

there as a person, when I served there as a young man in uniform

proudly defending the ideals on which America was built.

I often think, how is it different today? How is today's soldier in

Iraq different than soldiers 40 years ago in Vietnam? I think there are

some differences, but there are obviously many striking similarities.

Obviously, our soldiers today have communications technologies and

other war-fighting technologies that are far superior to what we had 40

years ago in Vietnam. Soldiers now have access to a 24-hour news cycle

that we did not have in the 1960s.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is the same, what is exactly the same, is the

fact that our soldiers are trained and equipped to accomplish the

mission given to them by their political leaders in Washington. They

are trained to execute this mission and to the best of their ability,

without any thought to whether that mission is right or wrong, or even

whether that mission is well thought out. Clearly, this is very similar

to what we experienced during Vietnam.

When I served in Vietnam, we were trying to execute a mission that

was impossible to do because our political leaders had given us a

poorly defined mission that we could not win militarily.

Our brave men and women serving in Iraq rely on us, their political

leaders, to develop a winning strategy, and it is very clear that we

are not winning in Iraq by any standard of measurement that you might

want to use.

I returned from my service in Vietnam at the height of the anti-war

sentiment; and let me tell you, there was no worse feeling than coming

home after a tour of duty to find that you had come home to an American

society that was not grateful and was not behind you.

I want to make sure that our sons and daughters serving in Iraq today

do not experience what we experienced 35, 40 years ago. The American

people and their leaders in Congress all support the men and women

executing the outlined mission. These men and women who have fought and

defended our country should be proud of the job they have done, and we

all are proud of them.

However, we should have learned from the mistakes our political

leaders made in Vietnam and not make those mistakes again.

The problems we are having in Iraq have nothing to do with our troops

and

their ability and their training and their equipment. Our problem is

with our policy.

The men and women serving in Iraq are counting on their political

leaders to develop a successful strategy in Iraq, and interjecting more

young American men and women in uniform into the crossfire of an Iraqi

civil war is simply not the right approach.

The warring factions in Iraq have been at odds since the death of

Muhammad in 632 A.D., and the United States military is not going to

solve an Iraqi political problem, a problem that has existed between

the Sunnis and the Shias for more than 1,400 years.

Past troop surges aimed at stemming the violence in Iraq have failed,

and continuing to deploy more American troops will not bring us any

closer to a self-governed Iraq.

We have been training and equipping Iraqi security forces for almost

3 years. We have 325,000 trained, conducting security operations there.

The continuing presence of large numbers of American troops in Iraq

only postpones the day when Iraqis will have to assume responsibility

for their own government. Ultimately, it is incumbent upon the Iraqis

to make peace and promote democracy in their own country.

With 140,000 of our troops in Iraq, the war in Iraq is exhausting our

resources, resources that we, our people, are demanding that we have at

home to solve some of our domestic priorities such as health care and

education. And those resources are not only dollars; they are human

blood.

Again, I stand here today to oppose the Iraqi troop surge because all

evidence suggests that it is not a path to victory in Iraq and will

only put more Americans in harm's way.

Ultimately, the debate today is about one thing, the men and women

that proudly wear the uniform and the best way to take them out of the

center of an increasing sectarian conflict and civil war in Iraq.