Mr. Speaker, I proudly stand today with fellow

veterans as the House debates the most damaging, costly, and divisive

course of U.S. military involvement since Vietnam.

At a naval station in California, I treated combat veterans returning

home from Vietnam, many with severe physical and psychological wounds

like PTSD and the effects of agent orange. After Vietnam, America swore

there would never be another tragic military misadventure, but that is

exactly what is happening in Iraq.

The American people want this Congress to end the war and to bring

our soldiers home now, not 2 years from now at the end of this

President's term. That is what the American people elected Democrats to

do in November.

What we do this week is a miniscule little step. Step two will come

when we get to appropriations next month.

We have to get out of Iraq. We have to get out now, not 2 years from

now. We are killing them, they are killing us, and nothing is getting

better. And the reasons we started this whole war have turned out to be

false. The American people know this, and today they are watching our

debate. They will judge our actions.

Getting U.S. soldiers out of Iraq has been my top priority since they

were sent there 4 years ago under false pretenses. And the new claim by

the President that escalating the war will reduce the violence is just

another attempt to mislead the American people. It is a lot like Lyndon

Johnson sending the bombers into Cambodia and Laos. They don't accept

it. The American people don't accept it and they won't.

Those who claim we cannot leave Iraq without causing chaos ignore

reality.

I ask to insert in the Record a piece by Retired Lieutenant General

and Reagan administration NSA Director William Odom that decisively

debunks this argument.

Chaos, not democracy, has taken root in Iraq, and chaos will continue

to take U.S. lives until we act in our best interest and order our

people out of harm's way.

News accounts continue to remind us that our soldiers don't even have

the proper body and vehicle armor. We cannot adequately protect the

soldiers already serving, but more were ordered in anyway. If you want

the most basic reason to vote to oppose escalation, it is that we

haven't properly equipped the troops already in Iraq, and we are not

doing any better by the troops we are sending in now.

Just being on the record against the President's escalation of this

war is not enough. The only way to diffuse the violence in Iraq is to

defund the war in Iraq. Congress has the power to control the funding,

and we have the responsibility to exercise the power vested in us by

the Constitution. That is what the American people elected us to do. We

must exercise our constitutional power as a co-equal branch of

government and do what the President is unwilling to do: bring our

soldiers home.

When appropriations for Iraq come to the floor, I intend to offer an

amendment based on the 1970 Hatfield-McGovern appropriations amendment

to end the war in Vietnam. It will be an amendment to provide funding

to protect our soldiers as we bring them home in a planned, safe, and

orderly way, and to prohibit taxpayers' monies from being used to

continue or expand the war in Iraq. This will provide a transition for

the Iraqi security forces using a benchmark that matters: the date when

U.S. troops will be out of there.

The Iraqis can't help themselves until we get out. Right now, almost

anything constructive that Iraqis do is seen as collaborating with the

United States occupiers. We have to get out of the way so the Iraqis

can solve their own problems. We can't help; we just make good targets.

So I want to encourage everyone in the House to vote for this

resolution. I want to make it the biggest, strongest, clearest vote

that we can get to let the President know for the second time, he

ignored the election, that the Congress says ``no.''

I know that many Members of the Republican Party are as distressed as

I am about Iraq, and I admire their courage in standing up to their

President. Every veteran, including myself, in this House and in this

Nation is very proud of our soldiers. They have done what we have asked

them to do. It is time for new orders to be issued. It is time to end

the U.S. role in the Iraq civil war. It is not a war on terrorism; it

is a civil war. And bring our soldiers home. We can begin to do it

immediately. That is what I advocate and that is what the American

people expect from us.