Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this resolution and to

call upon my colleagues to make a commitment to protect our troops and

to bring them home as quickly and safely as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and Members of Congress were

deceived. Every reason we were given for invading Iraq was false.

Weapons of mass destruction, not there. Saddam Hussein working hand in

glove with al Qaeda, not true.

I ask you, if the President had gone to the American people and said,

we must invade a country that poses no imminent threat to us and

sacrifice thousands of lives in order to create a

democratic government in Iraq, would we have assented? I think not.

As the President now says to us that we should continue indefinitely

to expend American blood and treasure to support one side in a

sectarian civil war, should Congress continue to consent? I think not.

We need to say enough already. Enough with the lies and the deceit and

the evasions, enough with the useless bloodshed.

We must protect our troops and ensure their safety while they are in

Iraq. But we must not send more troops there to intervene in a civil

war whose outcome they cannot determine.

And we should set a swift timetable to withdraw our troops from Iraq

and let the contending Iraqi factions know that we will not continue to

expend American blood and treasure to referee their civil war.

Only if faced with the reality of imminent withdrawal of American

troops might the Iraqis strike a deal with each other and end the civil

war. We know, Mr. Speaker, that the administration has botched the

handling of this war. They stood by as Baghdad was looted, they failed

to guard ammunition depots, they disbanded the Iraqi Army, they

crippled the government by firing all of the competent civil servants

in the name of debaathification, and they wasted countless billions of

dollars on private contractors and on God only knows what with no

accounting.

And all this while they continued to deny resources to the real war

on the real terrorists. They let Osama bin Laden escape.

They allowed the Taliban to recover and to reconquer. They allow our

ports to remain unprotected from uninspected shipping containers, and

they let loose nuclear materials remain unaccounted for, waiting to be

smuggled to al Qaeda to be made into nuclear weapons.

And why does the President want more troops in Iraq? To expand our

role from fighting Sunni insurgents to fighting the Shiite militias

also. Of course, when we attack the Shiite militias, they will respond

by shifting their targets from Sunnis to American troops. American

casualties will skyrocket, and we will be fighting two insurgencies

instead of one.

I believe the President has no real plan other than not to ``lose

Iraq'' on his watch, and to hand over the whole mess to a successor in

2 years. He will ignore anything we do that doesn't have the force of

law. That is why this resolution must be only the first step.

In the supplemental budget we will consider next month, we should

exercise the only real power we have, the Congressional power of the

purse. We will not cut off the funds and leave our troops defenseless

before the enemy, as the demagogues would imply. But we should limit

the use of the funds we provide to protecting the troops while they are

in Iraq and to withdrawing them on a timetable mandated in the law. We

should provide funds to rebuild the Army and to raise our readiness

levels. We should provide funds for diplomatic conferences in case

there is any possibility of negotiating an end to the Iraqi civil war.

And we should provide funds for economic reconstruction assistance. But

above all, we must use the power of the purse to mandate a timetable to

withdraw the troops from Iraq.

We must use the power the people have entrusted to us. The best way

to protect our troops is to withdraw them from the middle of a civil

war they cannot win and that is not our fight.

I know that if we withdraw the troops, the civil war may continue and

could get worse. But this is probably inevitable no matter how long our

troops remain. And if the Iraqis must fight a civil war, I would rather

they fight it without 20,000 more Americans dying.

Yes, the blindness of the administration is largely to blame for

starting a civil war in Iraq, but we cannot end it. Only the Iraqis can

settle their civil war. We can only make it worse and waste our blood

and treasure pointlessly.

So let us pass this resolution, and then let us lead this country out

of the morass in Iraq so that we can devote our resources to protecting

ourselves from the terrorists and to improving the lives of our people.