Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent

Resolution 63.

I thank the Armed Services Committee chairman, Mr. Skelton, for

carrying this legislation in support of our military troops and

opposing the President's plan to send at least 21,500 more troops to

Iraq.

I speak today as a proud veteran who served in the United States

armed service as a paratrooper in the 101st and 82nd Airborne Division.

As a veteran and as a Congressman, I voted against this war in year

2002 because no one could convince me why we had to be there in the

first place. I was tormented with this decision. I talked to many of my

constituents. I called the bishop in my area. I couldn't see what

invading Iraq had to do with securing the homeland. No one in the

administration could convince me that there were weapons of mass

destruction in Iraq. But we sent our troops there anyway, without

proper training or proper equipment.

This administration was in such a hurry to invade Iraq that we sent

our military in there with defective body armor and Hummers that

couldn't withstand the roadside bombs. In fact, before Congress made

any appropriations for an Iraq invasion, the President took $600

million from our troops in Afghanistan and sent it to Iraq.

The administration has refused to listen to its own generals, to

Congress or to the American people. They just do what they want.

After September 11, I was willing to do anything to make our country

safe, like all of us. We came together in a bipartisan way. I believed

in fighting terrorists in Afghanistan was the right thing to do, but

the current situation in Iraq proves what we have been saying all

along, that the Iraq war has not and will not make America safer.

Instead, it is costing the American taxpayers $200 million every day.

The money that we spent in Iraq could have sent 17 million high school

students to college. Can you imagine, 17 million students going on to

college right now that we could have provided assistance to, or paid

for 6 million new school teachers, reduced the student ratio, funded

the No Child Left Behind Act, or help with Katrina. But more money has

been spent on this war, and yet it is costing us money for those that

are losing their lives right now.

Over 3,000 men and women have given their lives for this war, and

over 23,000 are coming home wounded or disabled. Mr. Speaker, over

10,000 of these troops are so severely wounded that they will never be

able to serve again. Let me tell you, and you have to look at them,

never able to serve again.

Now the President wants to send 21,500 more troops to the most

dangerous part of Iraq. Why? Why are we sending our troops to fight in

another country's civil war? Mr. Speaker, this isn't a strategy for

success. This is a desperation attempt by the administration who can't

admit that they made a mistake. They made a mistake, and they need to

admit it. And the sooner we come to this realization, the better off

this country will be. As a veteran, I understand that sometimes war is

necessary, but as a veteran, I also know that war should always be the

last resort because war means someone's sons and daughters won't come

home. That means separating parents from their children, leaving their

homes, someone making a sacrifice.

In my home State of California alone, we have lost 325 men and women

in Iraq. Back in my home district, we have lost 10 outstanding young

men. It just breaks my heart. Mr. Speaker, you don't put the American

families through this kind of pain unless you are sure, beyond any

shadow of doubt, that there are no other options. The President had

failed to convince me in 2002, and I am still not convinced to this

day.

I say let's support this resolution. Let's bring back our men.