Mr. Speaker, I rise in vigorous opposition to this

resolution. With all due respect to my colleagues across the aisle,

this resolution does not outline a new strategy for how we move forward

in Iraq and it will have absolutely no impact on the current strategy.

Furthermore, it is the wrong signal to send to our allies in the region

and the wrong signal to send to our troops, those brave, courageous men

and women in uniform who have performed magnificently and done

everything that we have asked them to do.

This nonbinding resolution addresses a tactic, not an overall

strategy; a tactic that the President of the United States as Commander

in Chief has full constitutional authority to move with.

Now, I respect my colleagues across the aisle, and I know we all want

to see a disengagement of our troops from harm's way in Iraq. But I

would submit that disengagement must be done under favorable

circumstances in the interests of our national security. There is no

other alternative.

Let's look at what would happen with a failed policy in Iraq. Iraq is

on the verge of anarchic fragmentation. There are 27 ethnic groups in

Iraq. It is not as simple as a Sunni versus Shiia conflict. There are

other splinter groups using violence for their own designs.

Precipitous withdrawal from Iraq will lead to unprecedented violence,

spilling over into neighboring countries such as Jordan, Kuwait and

Saudi Arabia, and we will see Shiia uprisings in Lebanon and Bahrain,

which have significant Shiia populations. Jordan is already facing

massive numbers of refugees coming across the border, putting strain.

And Iranian influence is growing. The regime is intent on gaining

hegemony in the region, exerting its influence widely throughout the

Middle East and controlling oil and gas reserves to use the money to

further fuel terrorism. Al Qaeda will consolidate a base to work from

in western Iraq to perpetrate further transnational terrorism, and

Turkey will be compelled to cross borders to deal with separatist

groups.

America, dear America, will lose support of its vital allies in the

region and our reputation will suffer immensely for a very long period

of time, much longer than what we saw after the Vietnam conflict.

It is clear to me that security and political reconciliation in Iraq

run parallel, and without halting the spiral of violence,

reconciliation within Iraq will not occur. Without halting the spiral

of violence, our allies in the Persian Gulf and the broader Middle East

will be forced to deal with their own political disruption, rather than

starting multilateral dialogue that is so essential for a longer

standing peace throughout this entire region, whether we are talking

about the Palestinian issues, Lebanon, Iraq or Iran. Our allies in the

region, particularly, need political cover. I have heard this from

numerous Arab Ambassadors whom I have had many conversations with.

The ground must be laid for multilateral diplomacy. It will not occur

during a spiral of violence. Our allies in the region have given

commitment that they will help with Iraqi military training, police

training, as well as rebuilding of Iraq and further resources, once the

stage is set with security and a move toward reconciliation.

So, if we are going to be responsible in this body, there are

questions we really need to ask if we are going to formulate a strategy

and work with this administration for a winning strategy in Iraq. The

questions that need to be asked are these: What are the benchmarks for

its Iraqi military? What are the benchmarks for the Iraqi Government,

for reconciliation and for internal reform in Iraq? What are the rules

of engagement for our troops who will be going over there to assist in

this Baghdad security operation? What resources are available? What

manpower and personnel are available to our State Department and USAID

to help and assist in the reform and reconciliation process so that we

can create the groundwork for diplomatic resolution? And as we look at

a clear holding bill, who is going to do the holding? Who is going to

do the building? These are questions that a responsible Congress should

be asking, not whether or not to support this surge.

The American people voted for change. This resolution offers nothing

to shape a new strategy on how to move forward successfully in Iraq.

The American people deserve more from Congress, and, by God, our troops

deserve more from this Congress.