Mr. Speaker, I am a proud member of the Foreign Affairs

Committee, I am a member of the Progressive Caucus and the Out of Iraq

Caucus, and I have been working to bring our troops home since before

we sent them there.

Mr. Speaker, the decision to send more brave Americans into the Iraq

grinder is an act of staggering arrogance for the President. Nearly

two-thirds of our people think this is a deeply flawed, tragically

misguided policy. They get it, Mr. Speaker. They can see that more

troops won't stop the sectarian violence, because it is our very

military presence that ignited this sectarian violence in the first

place.

The human cost in Iraq has been devastating. By some estimates,

several hundred thousand Iraq citizens have died, died for the cause of

their own so-called liberation. No wonder a majority of Iraqis want the

occupation to end.

As the late columnist Molly Ivins put it, ``Iraq is clearly hubris

carried to the point of insanity. It is damn hard to convince people

you're killing them for their own good.''

I hope that an overwhelming vote in favor of this resolution will

compel the President to rethink his Iraq policy. But, if not, this body

will have no choice but to take further steps. Ultimately we must do

more than send a message. We must send a convoy of military planes to

bring our troops home.

Together with my colleagues, Congresswomen Lee and Waters, I have

offered a plan to end the war once and for all. Our bill is H.R. 508,

the Bring Our Troops Home and Iraq Sovereignty Restoration Act. H.R.

508 would complete a fully funded military withdrawal from Iraq within

6 months of enactment, because our military and their families have

given enough for this policy that is only increasing the terrorist

threat and doing damage to our national security. The bill would

accelerate the training of Iraqi Security Forces during that 6-month

period. And because Iraq is not yet ready to defend its people against

thugs, insurgents and militias, our bill calls for an international

stabilization force to help keep the peace in Iraq. But it would stay

only for 2 more years and would deploy only at the request of the Iraqi

Government.

Because we have already poured enough of the people's money down this

sinkhole, H.R. 508 would prohibit any further funding to deploy U.S.

troops, but would provide the resources for a safe withdrawal of all of

our U.S. military personnel and contractors.

The proposal would also provide for humanitarian aid and major

investments to rebuild Iraq's physical and economic infrastructure,

because taking our troops out of Iraq doesn't mean abandoning Iraq.

We can and we must go from military occupier to reconstruction

partner.

Our proposal expressly prohibits the construction of U.S. military

bases in Iraq because it is that kind of permanent occupation that

fuels the rage and anti-American jihadists in the Middle East.

Iraq should belong to the Iraqis, and that includes Iraq's resources.

So under the terms of our bill, the United States would forfeit any

proprietary claim to Iraqi oil.

Finally, H.R. 508 guarantees full health care funding, including

mental health benefits, for U.S. veterans in military operations in

Iraq and other conflicts. It is the least, the very least, we can do to

express our gratitude and repay their sacrifices.

Mr. Speaker, we must never, ever forget what war does to bodies, to

minds, to families, to communities and to the human soul. The victims

of war are not pieces to be moved around on a chess board. They are our

fellow citizens in a global village that gets smaller every day. They

are our brothers. They are our sisters. They are God's children and

have as much right to human dignity as you or I.

The one thing I desperately hope we have learned from the Iraq

nightmare is that we must find more sensible, humane ways to keep

America safe and resolve global conflict because, if we do not, given

the kinds of weapons that are available today, I fear that we are

putting the entire planet on a path toward destruction.

I fear most of all for our children. ``War,'' said Martin Luther

King, Jr., ``is a poor chisel to carve out tomorrow.'' Mr. Speaker,

tomorrow belongs to our children. So, for their sake, we must find

alternatives to war. We must protect America by relying not on our

basest impulses, but on the most honorable and humane of American

values, our love of freedom, our desire for peace, our capacity for

global leadership, and our compassion for the people of the world.