Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It is indeed

an honor to stand before this House as a very proud member of our

Foreign Affairs Committee under our distinguished Chairman Lantos and

also to stand as our co-chair of our Democratic Group on National

Security, as well as a voting member of the NATO parliament.

I have been to Iraq. I have been to Afghanistan, been to Pakistan,

been to Kuwait. I have been there with our soldiers and our generals,

and what I am about to say is based upon my experience in this whole

arena.

Now, a lot has been said and I think it has been misguided, very

unfortunate. So allow me, if I may, to state for the record exactly

what this resolution does.

There has been talk up here about this resolution is here to cut

funds. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no Democrat in

this Congress who would dare cut the funds from our soldiers who are in

harm's way, and any Member that continues to say that is doing a

disservice to this Congress and to the people of the United States.

This resolution does not say we are pulling out troops. We know the

situation in the Middle East. We know this region is vital to our

interests. The issue here is not pulling out troops. The issue here is

a vote, up or down, on a policy that says two things, 57 words. Allow

me to read them to you.

It says that the ``Congress and the American people will continue to

support and protect the members of the United States Armed Forces who

are serving or who have served bravely and honorably in Iraq.''

Then it says: ``Congress disapproves of the decision of President

George W. Bush announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than

20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq.''

That is what it says. Those two things. Let us not mislead the

American public anymore, certainly not on what we are going to vote on

here today. I stand as a proud member who has cosponsored, who supports

this resolution 100 percent because of four important reasons.

The first reason is that this 21,500-man escalation, number one, is

deceiving in and of itself, when we know from the CBO account that it

is not 21,500. It is more like 48,000 when you put the support troops

involved. I am here to tell you, this is a dangerous strain on an

already overstrained military.

Let me share with you what the National Security Advisory Group is

saying. It says this: nearly all of the available combat units in the

U.S. Army, Army National Guard, Marine Corps, have been used in the

current operations. Every available combat brigade from the active duty

Army has already been to Afghanistan or Iraq at least for a 12-month

tour, and most are now in

their second or third tours of duty. There is a strain here, and some

are on their fourth tours of duty.

Approximately 95 percent of the Army National Guard's combat

battalions and special operations units have been mobilized since 9/11,

and there is very little available combat capacity remaining in the

Army National Guard.

All active duty Marine units are being used on a dangerously tight

rotation schedule, but here is another.

We often forget that these are soldiers with families, with mothers,

with fathers who are out there, separated from their children. Listen

to this. This is why we are against this 21,500, or 48,000, surge.

Between 2001 and 2004, divorce rates among active duty Army officers

have tripled, and rates among Army enlisted soldiers have gone up.

Let me conclude by saying this: on the bleached bones of many great

past nations and civilizations are written those pathetic words, ``too

late.'' They moved too late. The American people are watching us and

they are hoping and they are praying that we not move too late, and let

us get our young men and women out of this crossfire of a civil war