Mr. Speaker, the coalition of the willing no longer is.

If those who are no longer with us are against us, then we have lost

the support and the admiration of the entire world. Those of us who

came of age in the sixties believing that war is the ultimate breakdown

of civilized process have done the unthinkable. We trusted our

leadership when we should have questioned more.

We gave war a chance. We called upon our sons and daughters entering

the prime of their young lives to step up, as had generations before

them, to defend our freedom and our liberty against an Iraqi nuclear

threat that did not exist. Our young people did not disappoint. They

answered the call, have been fighting bravely and ferociously, putting

their lives on the line every day for going on 4\1/2\ years.

They followed the orders of their officers right up to the Commander

in Chief, and a grateful Nation, indeed, can ask no more. They did not

disappoint. But it is we who let them down, tragically. We are reminded

that the President is the Commander in Chief, and, indeed, he is. He

sent them to fight and die in a war based on a

faulty and tortuously shifting premise. That we, in our positions of

great trust, were misled and then misplaced our trust, does not excuse

us.

He sent them to fight in a war without equipping them properly, and,

as many generals believe initially, in insufficient numbers. With an

abundance of prayers but inadequate plans, he sent them to fight

international terrorists; but, instead, they are mired down, enmeshed,

and are being slaughtered in someone else's sectarian and deadly civil

war while the real terrorists prepare to retake Afghanistan.

Six years ago I voted with the President. He is our President. I did

not want him to fail. His failure is our country's failure, and that is

not acceptable. But here is where we are. We have lost the support of

even those in the region who wanted Saddam's demise. We have not found

the real terrorist, Osama bin Laden.

We have lost the support of the coalition of the willing. We have

lost the support of our major allies. We have lost the prestige and

admiration of the world. We have lost our credibility. We have lost the

confidence of the American people. And we have lost over 3,000 precious

lives of our bravest patriotic and promising young citizens. I voted

with the President, and I was wrong, but I know I was wrong.

Grown-ups know that not every story has a happy ending regardless of

good intentions. I am afraid this is one such story. I am afraid we

have been led into a dead-end chasm from which there is no easy escape.

Under the administration's leadership, everything has gone wrong. So

what do we do now? Do we compound the disaster?

Perhaps we can learn from the great Iraqi poet, Omar Kyayyam, who in

the Runaiyat wrote:

``The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,

Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit

Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,

Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.''

Mr. Speaker, sending 20,000 additional troops is not a change of

plans, it is merely an escalation. About one out of every 40 people we

send to Iraq comes home in a casket. As an old math teacher, I can tell

you by extrapolation that sending 20,000 more brings home 500 more

dead. Little else changes.

This vote is, indeed, nonbinding. It is but the little boy in the

crowd yelling, ``The emperor has no plan.'' Mr. Speaker, managing

failure is unpleasant, but reinforcing it is criminal. Vote for the

resolution so that we might help the President to avoid compounding

this disaster.