Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time.

I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 63.

I am a strong supporter of our service men and women and strongly

committed to finding a reasonable and responsible resolution which

includes a redeployment of our troops. However, a responsible

resolution does not include the deployment of more of our brave service

men and women to Iraq. Sixty-six percent of Americans oppose the

President's escalation plan to send additional troops to Iraq. They

believe, as I do, without a new policy to secure the peace and

stabilize Iraq, further escalation will do nothing but unnecessarily

risk the lives of more U.S. service men and women.

There are currently 135,000 U.S. troops courageously serving in Iraq.

At the direction of our government, they left their fathers, mothers,

brothers, children, and wives. This war is having, as you know, a

significant impact on their families and our communities.

In the district that I represent, the 32nd Congressional District of

California, we have lost 13 sons to combat. Note the photograph that I

have here on display. This includes Lance Corporal Francisco Martinez

from the city of Duarte in the San Gabriel Valley, who bravely served

our country despite not even being a U.S. citizen. I was able to meet

his parents. They were very humble individuals who spoke only Spanish

and proudly stated that their son served their country with honor. It

breaks my heart to think that this was only one service member, only one

of the more than 3,000 families that have been through this since the

war started almost 4 years ago.

The past 3 months, as you know, have been the deadliest months in the

war in over 2 years. While Latinos make up 12 percent of the U.S.

population, they make up 17 percent of the service men and women in

combat in Iraq, and 11 percent of those have already been killed. U.S.

casualties are now more than 3,100 and more than 23,400 service men and

women have been wounded in action, and nearly half of those wounded

will not be able to lead a normal life because of severe injuries,

permanent disabilities, and post-traumatic stress syndrome. Yet many of

these service men and women will return to Iraq for a second, third,

and maybe even a fourth tour.

The President's proposal to escalate ignores the real needs of our

troops and the grave reality of this situation. Three times in the past

2 years the number of U.S. troop levels have increased in Iraq. Three

times this approach has failed. And during Operation Together Forward,

additional troops were sent into Baghdad because of an increase in

sectarian violence. U.S. military spokesman General William Caldwell

stated that the increase was a failure and had ``not met our overall

expectations of sustaining a reduction in the levels of violence.''

Even the commander of the U.S. Central Command in Iraq has testified

that top military commanders in Iraq do not believe that increasing the

number of troops is the right approach. He stated, ``I do not believe

that more American troops right now is the solution to this problem. I

believe that the troop levels need to stay where they are.''

Increasing the number of U.S. troops is not a solution. The increase

does nothing to improve long-term security and end sectarian violence.

Our country needs a policy to secure and stabilize Iraq and one that

constructively engages in diplomacy and partners with our neighboring

countries and the region to create a stable and peaceful nation, not a

blank check to send more men and women into harm's way. We need a

policy and a plan to put the welfare of our service men and women first

so they can come home, rejoin their families, and receive the care they

deserve. They should include adequate services for returning service

men and women, including culturally competent care, mental health care

for veterans, housing and education.

We need a plan to ensure that U.S. tax dollars are not going to war

profiteering and fraud, such as the $1.4 billion that has been somehow

charged by Halliburton. I strongly believe that this is possible, but

it will require courage, cooperation, and leadership on the part of all

my colleagues. Let me say to my colleagues that I support our troops

and the war on terror. Unfortunately, the war in Iraq is not the war on

terror.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to support and protect our sons and

daughters who are serving, as these young people have served us so

well. I will do so by voting for this resolution and by supporting

their redeployment.