Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, this debate marks the beginning of the end of the ill-

conceived, mismanaged and ultimately failed war in Iraq. The war in

Iraq was launched on the basis of false and misleading intelligence

about a nonexistent nuclear weapons program. When the inspectors looked

for nuclear weapons in all the most likely places, there was nothing

there. When they looked in all the unlikely places, there was nothing

there. When this was reported to the world, the world said ``don't

invade.'' But when this was reported to the President of the United

States, he chose to invade Iraq. In other words, the President did the

opposite of what the evidence would dictate.

Here we are, 4 years after the invasion. The American people looked

at the facts on the ground in Iraq and voted in November to de-

escalate. The generals looked at the situation and said de-escalate.

The Iraq Study Group analyzed our options and said we should de-

escalate.

So what has the President of the United States decided? After all the

evidence, he has chosen to escalate the war. Once again, our President

is doing the opposite of what the evidence and common sense dictates.

Our troops continue to fight heroically to prevent Iraq from sliding

into anarchy, but they are losing ground to a deep emotional cycle of

religious strife and revenge that goes back 14 centuries. Our soldiers

cannot be beaten on the military battlefield, but neither should they

be faulted for failing to drain a political swamp.

The American people are now speaking out with one clear voice, in

frustration and in anger, demanding change, demanding a new direction

in Iraq. But the President isn't giving us a new direction. All he has

to offer is more of the same, an escalation of our troop presence in

Iraq. And this escalation ignores the recommendation of the bipartisan

Iraq Study Group, which said that all combat brigades not necessary for

force protection could be out of Iraq by the beginning of 2008.

This week, we have a choice: We can say no to the President's failed

war in Iraq, we can say no to the President's escalation, and we can

say no to the unnecessary loss of another American soldier, marine or

airman; or we can once again vote to stay the course and to continue on

with this failed policy.

Many Americans have expressed frustration that the resolution we vote

on this week is a nonbinding resolution, and I understand that

frustration. On January 9, Senator Kennedy and I introduced companion

bills in the Senate and House to block President Bush's new plan to

escalate troop levels in Iraq. Our legislation would prevent the

obligation or expenditure of a single dollar to increase the number of

troops in Iraq unless Congress affirmatively voted to do so.

But I would not dismiss this resolution's importance simply because

it is nonbinding. Twenty-four years ago, this House took up another

nonbinding resolution when it first debated my nuclear freeze

resolution. We passed the nuclear freeze on the floor of the House. It

was nonbinding and it never passed the Senate. But it nevertheless

changed the course of this Nation's nuclear weapons policy. It did so

because of the pressure it put on the White House to change, and it was

followed by binding legislation that halted tests of anti-satellite

weapons, cut funding for Star Wars and cut in half the plan size of the

MX missile force.

That is why I fully understand why some Republican Members have

simultaneously denounced this resolution as silly and unserious, and,

at the same time, have tried to prevent its passage. Why are they

afraid of a nonbinding resolution? Because this resolution exposes the

lack of support in the Congress for the President's escalation scheme.

The administration's failed strategy has already ended any chance of

a successful short-term outcome. The just-released, deeply pessimistic

National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq simply confirms this situation.

We are in the middle of a sectarian religious civil war in Iraq, and

the presence of our troops is preventing the Iraqi people from taking

responsibility for their own security and for their own political

solution that must follow.

This war should never have been fought, period. It was a mistake, the

American people know it was a mistake, our military leaders know it was

a mistake and a bipartisan majority in the United States Congress know

it was a mistake.

Let's pass this resolution and send a strong signal to the Bush

administration that it is time to stop the escalation, bring this war

to an end, and bring our troops home. I urge adoption of this

resolution.