Madam Speaker, I am privileged to be a member of the

House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Our chairman, Mr. Lantos, has

scheduled for March a hearing to discuss the different proposals

relating to the handling of the war in Iraq. He has promised a lot of

time for debate on all the different bills introduced in the House of

Representatives, ranging from those that call for us to pull out of

Iraq immediately, to those that demonstrate our presence there as part

of a larger war, not against a nation, but against a movement, Islamic

jihadis. They are everywhere and are responsible for attacks in India,

Jordan, Israel, England, Egypt, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Russia,

Spain, Turkey, the Gaza, Morocco, Pakistan and in the United States and

Iraq.

Chairman Lantos wants to make sure that all sides are heard, that all

possible alternatives are given an airing. But that is what is missing

in the bill that the Democratic majority has given us this evening: it

can't be amended. Can you imagine three days of debate without the

opportunity to amend a bill? That implies the Democratic leadership

believes they have a monopoly on truth and fear input from other

Members of Congress.

The bill we are debating today condemns the infusion of up to 21,000

more troops in Iraq. However, at a time when we should be excited about

a new proposal calling for a major shift in our policy on Iraq, the

bill we are debating condemns it. This proposal taps as its new leader

Lieutenant General David Patraeus, who should be given an opportunity

to succeed. Confirmed unanimously by the Senate, he has extensive

knowledge of other wars and military conflicts and has resolved that

America can achieve a favorable result in Iraq.

The new policy is a shift in the rules of engagement and calls upon

the Iraqis themselves to step up in responsibility and achievement. A

Washington Post story dated January 12 of this year with the byline,

``Withdrawals could start if Iraq plan works: Gates,'' repeats the

words of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates testifying before the Senate

Armed Services Committee on January 11, Gates said: ``If these

operations actually work, you can begin to see a lessening of the U.S.

footprint both in Baghdad and Iraq itself. Then you could have a

situation later this year where you could actually begin withdrawing.''

Isn't that what Americans want, a plan of action with a new focus,

stabilizing Iraq and bringing our troops home? But that plan is not

being debated today, and that is why I am going to vote against this

resolution.

We live in extremely dangerous times. We know Iran is developing

atomic weaponry. We also know that six other Arab nations are actively

seeking atomic technology, according to the International Atomic Energy

Agency. The stakes are onerous. That is why America's men and women in

uniform not only deserve our support in the field, but also here in the

House of Representatives, by allowing their opinions to be voiced

through their Members of Congress. It is the least we can do for them.