Madam Speaker, I rise as Chair of the 76-member Out of

Iraq Caucus, and I will be followed by many other members during this

hour. I rise in support of our troops and in support of this resolution

opposing the President's escalation of this war.

Madam Speaker, I support this resolution, hoping this will be a first

step in ending this war and reuniting our troops with their families

and loved ones. This is an unbinding resolution. The real test for this

Congress is going to be whether or not we will continue to fund this

war.

For nearly 4 years, our troops have served bravely and admirably in

Iraq. Unfortunately, the President and his administration have decided

to pursue a political agenda when it decided to push for an invasion of

Iraq. The President ignored the advice of dozens of experts inside and

outside the government about invading Iraq. For example, the

administration ignored the intelligence community's opinions about the

status of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. The

administration also ignored recommendations about the number of troops

needed to secure Iraq following the fall of Saddam Hussein. In

addition, the President and the administration ignored warnings about

the difficulty and danger of occupying Iraq and that Iraq would likely

break down into sectarian violence.

In short, the administration ignored everything that conflicted with

its plan to invade Iraq. Unfortunately, no one has borne the burdens of

the administration's Iraq narrow agenda more than our troops and their

families. The decision to escalate the war, to send more than 21,000

additional troops to Iraq, will only increase the burden on our troops.

Many of the troops serving in Iraq have served two, three, even four

tours of duty. And of course the failed Iraq policy has resulted in the

death of 3,109 U.S. troops, including 325 from my own State of

California, and injury of more than 23,000 others.

Madam Speaker, many experts believe that the President's latest plan

will not work, and early indications support that conclusion. About

5,000 troops have arrived in Baghdad since the President announced the

plan in January, yet the violence and devastation in Iraq is

increasing. It is estimated that more than 2,276 Iraqi civilians have

died so far this year and that more than 1,000 Iraqi security forces

and 33 U.S. servicemen have died in just the past week. We are sending

thousands more troops to Iraq in what is now known to be a civil war.

Sending more troops to Iraq is not the answer. The key to stabilization

is bringing our troops home and renewing our commitment to diplomacy.

This resolution is the first step in reining in this President and

his misguided policies. However, as many have noted, this is, again, an

unbinding resolution. I look forward to working with my colleagues on

the war, spending bills that will be considered in the coming months to

enact meaningful changes to this failed policy and to finally bring our

troops home. The future of the entire Middle East is at stake.

The President does not appear to understand or appreciate the

situation in Iraq is deteriorating each day. We are losing; however, we

can win. And we will win by using leadership to engage and unite rather

than attempting to overpower and conquer. Who are we fighting? The

Sunnis, the Kurds, the Shias? Who are the insurgents? Some Sunnis, some

Shias, some Kurds? Who are the terrorists? Shias, Sunnis, Kurds,

Syrians, Iranians? Who are we fighting? I don't think our soldiers

know, and I am not so sure this administration has really given the

kind of deep thought and consideration as to who we are really

fighting.

Diplomacy is the only answer. Today, we must oppose this escalation.

However, I have no choice but in the final analysis to oppose continued

funding of the American taxpayers' dollars to the war giant whose

appetite cannot be satisfied, but in the interest of peace, must be

denied.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.