Madam Speaker, when I left home this week for

Washington, my 6-year-old Kathryn became very sad. See, she has big,

beautiful brown eyes and they welled up with tears at the prospect of

my leaving again for Washington. And she said to me, Daddy, why do you

have to be a Congressman? And I thought of the words of the

Revolutionary War author Thomas Paine when he said, ``I prefer peace;

but if trouble must come, let it come in my time so that my children

can have peace.''

Madam Speaker, this is a pivotal moment for our Nation and a very

grave, solemn policy debate. We cannot afford to allow the ups and

downs of the daily news cycle set the course for our deliberations. The

stakes in Iraq are simply too high.

During last year's debate on Iraq, I emphasized that this war is

different from wars of the past. There is no front, no lines of

demarcation, no clear enemy in distinct uniforms. This is a war that

invades tranquil time and space without warning, carried out by those

who hide among populations seeking to exploit the vulnerable for

ruthless, ideological purposes.

We have never before waged a war in an era of globalization, in an

age when technology eviscerates the concept of distance, magnifies our

losses, trivializes our accomplishments, and places our adversaries in

a far better position to leverage our freedoms, particularly the

freedom of speech, against us. These are the complexities we face now.

Madam Speaker, I submit that our choices now stand to determine not

only the future of the Middle East but the very future of civilization.

We can point fingers and blame each other, or we can think

constructively together.

So what are our choices? The National Intelligence Estimate

categorically rejects an arbitrary or precipitous U.S. troop

withdrawal. The result

would be horrific chaos, a humanitarian disaster, destabilizing the

entire Middle East, emboldening the geopolitical aims of Iran, and

leading to a much less peaceful world in very short order.

The conflict in Iraq is dangerous, risky, and complex. And we can all

agree that our troops are doing an outstanding job, and so are their

families who bear the biggest burden in their absence.

I submit that our time and energy as leaders of this Nation should be

focused on new, clear military and geopolitical strategies.

First, Iraqis must fight for their own country now. They must lead in

the battle for Baghdad now.

Over the past several months I joined colleagues in urging the

President to deploy trained Iraqi troops into the heart of the battle

for Baghdad, and I am pleased to see that this recommendation is now

under way. However, I remain concerned about exposing our forces to

unnecessary danger in the sectarian violence of Baghdad. As best we

can, our troops should remain in support and training roles. I also

believe that it is prudent to send reinforcements to our marines in

Anbar province who are achieving good success against al Qaeda elements

in collaboration with Sunni tribal leadership.

Second, we must engage responsible members of the international

community, particularly the pan-Arab world, to assume a unified and

decisive role in neutralizing the forces of chaos and helping secure

stability and peace throughout the Middle East.

Third, we must provide meaningful congressional oversight. And I

commend Chairman Lantos for taking this lead in the House Foreign

Affairs Committee and for his commitment to a substantive and reasoned

debate in this regard.

I would have liked to have had the opportunity to support a

constructive bipartisan initiative drawing upon the substantive

resources like the Iraqi Study Group to enhance congressional oversight

and set out meaningful benchmarks to measure progress toward the

stabilization of Iraq and the drawdown of our troops.

While it would be politically easier for me to vote for this

resolution, I cannot. I see no useful purpose in supporting a

nonbinding resolution that may have the unintentional consequence of

undermining our efforts while our troops remain in harm's way.

Madam Speaker, this resolution, while wrapped in the mantle of

supporting our troops, does not point to a credible way forward in

Iraq. I believe I would make the same decision if a Democratic

administration were struggling with similarly arduous challenges. If we

flinch now, regardless of the goodwill behind our motivations, if we

are perceived as weak and divided and eager to throw up our hands in

frustration, we will pay a heavy price. And every nation that counts

upon us as a friend and ally will also pay a very heavy price. None of

us wants to see the repeat of the last helicopter out of Saigon.

I urge my colleagues, let's find constructive ways to get the job

done