I thank my colleague for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution supporting

our troops and disapproving the President's plan to escalate the war in

Iraq.

More than 4 years ago, the resolution to support a war in Iraq came

before this House. After careful consideration of the evidence and

arguments put forth for a unilateral preemptive attack on Iraq, I

decided I could not in good conscience vote for that resolution.

My ``no'' vote against the President's plan for war in Iraq is one of

my proudest moments in Congress. I didn't believe the case where war

had been made. There was no real evidence of weapons of mass

destruction in Iraq. The administration's arguments about al Qaeda

connections with Iraq were specious, and its attempt to link Iraq with

the tragedy of 9/11 was shameful.

I was deeply concerned about the effects of preemptive war on

America's standing in the world, and equally worried about the

ramifications for the greater Middle East, a region of great importance

and even greater fragility. And I had strong concerns about the

administration's preparation for the aftermath of a war in Iraq. The

administration was completely focused on waging war and not on winning

the peace.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, all of those concerns have been borne

out. There were no WMDs, no al Qaeda connections, no 9/11 link. It was

all trumped up evidence by an administration consumed with toppling the

dictator in Iraq. Today, Iraq is in civil war, the Middle East is even

more unsettled, and our standing in the world is at a low point. The

international support given to America after 9/11 was squandered and

will take years to repair the damage. And, as a Nation, we are even

less secure today than we were the day we invaded Iraq. I point this

out only because it is critically important to know where we have been

if we want to know where we should be going.

This resolution gives voice to the deep, deep opposition here in the

Congress and throughout the country to the President's plan for

escalating the war in Iraq.

I speak for the vast majority of my constituents on the central coast

of California when I state my unequivocal opposition to this

escalation. The administration's plan looks like more of the same

failed policies that got us here in the first place. It is a plan based

more on hope than on fact, buttressed by hysterical rhetoric. It is a

plan opposed by numerous military leaders and experts. It is, quite

frankly, simply not believable.

The recent National Intelligence Estimate makes it perfectly clear

that the President's grand plan is just never going to work. The

resolution here before us puts Congress on record against the

proposition that success will come only after more troops are thrown

into battle.

The other objective of this resolution is to remind everyone that

opposing the war in Iraq, and especially opposing the President's

escalation, is consistent with supporting our troops. Our men and women

in uniform have done everything we have asked them to do and so much

more. Over 3,000 have made the ultimate sacrifice. More than 20,000

others have been injured, so very many of them seriously.

Let no one doubt the bravery of our troops and the support that I and

my colleagues who are opposed to this war have for them. I am eternally

grateful for the sacrifices our men and women in uniform and their

families are willing to make every single day. They continue the long

distinguished line of soldiers, sailors and airmen that have kept our

country and so many others free from tyranny and oppression, but their

service is due more than heartfelt appreciation and flowery words from

politicians.

Their sacrifice, their service, is owed responsible leadership from

those civilian leaders with whom power ultimately rests, and that is

where our soldiers have been let down. This administration has taken

arrogance, stubbornness and incompetence to new heights. It ignored the

advice of military experts leading up to and throughout this war.

It stocked reconstruction teams with political hacks, and it brushed

off the indisputable reality of Iraq in a meltdown. It dismissed the

considered opinion of the Iraq Study Group, the Congress, most

importantly, the American people.

Make no mistake, the failure of the war in Iraq lies at the highest

levels of the White House and at the desks of the Pentagon's civilian

leadership, and the cost of that failure is borne by our troops, their

families and the Iraqi people. It is time for the administration to

stop obfuscating the conditions on the ground in Iraq, stop the charade

about so-called new plans that will finally bring success in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, it is time to stop the war in Iraq. Support the

troops. Indeed, bring them home.