Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Very roughly, you owe me a few.

Madam Speaker, listening to this debate tonight, it becomes obvious

that kind of like life itself, those of us in Congress have moments of

high drama and great importance, and by any measure, the date this

evening and tomorrow and the days that follow and, most importantly,

the vote that will attend it, is just such a moment.

I would observe, Madam Speaker, in the now nearly 231 years that this

great Union has endured, this House has encountered few sessions

demanding greater honesty, greater selflessness, and greater wisdom

than that of occasions of war. And as I said, this is such a time.

But this debate really does stand alone. It is unique over the more

than two centuries and three decades of our history, because from my

study at no time in this Nation's history has the Congress considered

the matter before us this week. The question of shall we resolve, in a

nonbinding resolution, that this House disagree with a mission, duly

designated by the constitutional authority vested in the President, as

Commander in Chief, in the conduct of the war, that this same Congress,

in an earlier session has, in fact, expressly endorsed.

I have listened today with great interest. I have enormous respect

for all Members on both sides of the aisle. But I have heard about how

wherever they are, many Members tonight will go to the well when they

ultimately vote and try to send the President a message, try to signify

to the administration that this war has not been conducted in the

appropriate way. It has not achieved the objectives that we all felt

were possible, in fact, absolutely necessary at its outset.

I would say, Madam Speaker, I understand that perspective; not only

understand it, in many ways I strongly share that perspective. But I

have to argue the fact of the matter is, for all of the good intentions

we have here tonight, the negative aspect of such an action is going to

far outweigh, far outweigh whatever good it might attempt to achieve.

The reality is, if this message is heard at all at the other end of

Pennsylvania Avenue, it is going to speak in whispers. Whispers. But in

other lands, in other continents, in other cities, far, far away, when

this resolution comes before us, and if it is passed, it is going to

crash like thunder. In places like Ramadi and Basra, from Baghdad and

beyond, friend and foe alike are going to hear something far different

than what we intend.

They are going to hear that through this vote we have abandoned the

Iraqi people. They are going to hear that America has forsaken this

struggle. They will hear that we disavow our military objective in

Baghdad really before it has meaningfully begun, and most importantly

in the shadows where our enemies lurk, in places like Tehran and

Damascus, the message will fail where its authors intend, but it will

succeed very, very mightily where they wish it would not.

Madam Speaker, for all of the good intent embodied in this proposal,

it will not bring a single soldier home sooner. This vote, no matter

what the tally, no matter what this board shows as to green and red at

the end of the day, will not shorten this conflict by a single month,

not by a week, not by a day. It will not change the course of a single

battle. It will not even alter a pebble that lies on the battlefields

in which those struggles will be fought.

It will, however, say to the insurgents, the Saddamists, the radical

Islamic militants and their patrons that time is on their side. It will

say that America has no stomach for this fight. And somewhere in a cave

in Afghanistan, or in a hut on the Afghan-Pakistan border, Osama bin

Laden is going to smile.

His words of a failure of America will be that much closer to

reality. As he has said: ``The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad, the

seat of the caliphate rule.'' They keep reiterating that ``success in

Baghdad will be success for the United States, failure in Iraq the

failure of the U.S. Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all their

wars and a beginning to the receding of their Zionist crusader tide

against us.''

Those are bad messages, Madam Speaker. But I would suggest

respectfully to all of my colleagues for all the wrong messages this

resolution will send to our enemies, nothing it contains will be more

devastating than what it says to our troops, to our military, those

brave men and women in uniform who answered the call to arms, issued

not by some ephemeral entity, but by us, by this Congress.

And how do we say through the resolution we are considering here

today, we support your needs, but we reject your mission? We allow for

your deployment but we shun the premise of your departure? And what do

we say to the wife or husband? How do we respond to the father or the

mother or the loved one of the next warrior lost in battle who asks,

why did you oppose through that resolution the job they were sent to

pursue but did absolutely nothing from preventing them from going from

the outset?

That is the tyranny, and I have to say it, Madam Speaker, that is the

folly of the resolution before us for all its lack of practical result,

for the fact that this resolution will do absolutely nothing. Never has

this Congress in its history of war considered an action of such

dramatic consequence.

Now, it is said during the Civil War that the great Southern general,

Robert E. Lee, was really tired, and I think we can all relate to this,

of the criticism, the second-guessing that was directed at his

leadership through the major newspapers of his time.

And he observed, Apparently all my best generals had become

journalists. Today, tonight, I think it can be fairly said of some,

apparently all of our best generals have become Congressmen. My

colleagues, we are not generals. The Constitution of this great Nation

does not provide for 535 Commanders in Chief, yet that is the reality

lost in the proposal that we are considering this night in this week.

But I would suggest, instead of being diminished by that fact,

instead of being lessened by what we are not, we need to be empowered

by what we are. And I say to my colleagues tonight on both sides of the

aisle, we indeed have a grave responsibility in this matter. But it

does not lie in nonbinding resolutions that send wrong messages to our

troops and absolutely wrong messages to our enemies. It rests in the

authorities vested in us by the Constitution of this great land, the

power to fund or not all matters of government, especially war.

Like all of us here tonight, I want this war to conclude. I represent

the 10th Mountain Division, the most deployed division in the United

States Army. I was there 3 weeks ago. I know the pain. I know the

suffering. And like all of you, I am frustrated by the path we have

traveled to this point, and I am troubled by the course that apparently

lies ahead.

And we can, we must have, a different approach, one that especially

places responsibility for success where it rightfully lies, and I have

heard my colleagues tonight speak about that, with the Iraqi people. I

propose an amendment to the supplemental appropriations bill that will

just do that, require the Iraqis to step forward, to stand up, to stop

the talking, and to begin to act.

It will fully fund the needs of our troops and provide for us, the

Congress, the rightful role and expedite an opportunity to review the

Iraqis effort and to judge the progress of this new mission in Baghdad.

These things have to be done. But this resolution, in my judgment, in

my judgment, is what must decidedly not.

This weekend I took the time to reread John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer

Prize-winning work ``Profiles in Courage.'' And in those pages our

martyred President spoke: ``In no other occupation but politics is it

expected that a man will sacrifice honor, prestige, and his chosen

career on a single issue.''

My friends, this is such a moment. I accuse nobody in this Chamber,

Madam Speaker, of any kind of transgression, honorable people, good

people. We will disagree, as I expect they will on this and other days,

but I do plead that every Member in this House vote on this resolution,

not for themselves, not for gain or posture through politics, not

because of their alleged attention to public opinion, because it is

right.

We can do better. We must. But this resolution is not the path to

that objective.