Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from

Northern California (Mrs. Tauscher).

Like so many of my colleagues, I stand here today in opposition to

President Bush's surge in Iraq.

We should not have attacked Iraq in the first place, and we

definitely should not escalate things further. The initial evidence for

the war was flimsy at best, and realizing that, I voted against the

authorization for war.

The most recent evidence that the President has presented in support

of this surge is even less credible, and I urge my colleagues to

prevent the President from throwing more gasoline onto a fire that is

already burning out of control.

When I speak to veterans of the Iraq war, I become infuriated by

their tales of the destruction that this President's policies have

wrought in that country. Nor can they fathom why their Commander in

Chief insists on squandering the strength of the greatest fighting

force in the history of the world.

While Iraq under Saddam Hussein's rule was a rogue state and an

affront to American values, today Iraqi citizens are forced to endure

even more severe and deadlier situations.

There is no indication that Iraq was a center for international

terrorism prior to President Bush's adventure there. Now, as a result

of his irresponsible actions, it undeniably is.

Over 3,000 brave American service men and women have lost their lives

in Iraq in addition to the 100,000 or more Iraqis who have been killed;

25,000 American soldiers have been injured.

For what, Mr. President? For what? You have yet to answer this simple

question, and I suspect this is because you do not have an answer.

There is not, nor can there be, a credible answer to this utter folly.

Each Member of this House has tales of constituents whose lives will

never be the same because of the Iraq war.

In the aftermath of 9/11, one of my constituents joined the Army out

of a deep sense of patriotism. One day while on patrol in Iraq, his

tank drove over an explosive device, sending the vehicle 10 feet in the

air. He survived but suffered severe brain and spinal injuries. For his

bravery, he was awarded the Purple Heart, multiple commendations and

other medals.

After completing a service to his country, he returned home to resume

his life with his wife and newly born triplets.

Upon returning to work, however, he found that he had difficulty

concentrating as a result of his head injury. He was diagnosed with

traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

As a result of the strain that the President's policies are placing

on the Veterans Administration, he, like so many of my constituents,

was unable to receive a change in his benefit allowance in a timely

manner. So that he could continue to live in dignity, local officials

and media had to put out a call for donations to pick up where his

government failed him.

This brave man expected that his sacrifices would be repaid with the

generosity that America promises to our veterans. Instead, he

encountered a system that is overextended and ill equipped to help him

when he needed it. Other constituents have told me that when they try

to call the Veterans Administration they have to wait on hold for over

2 hours before they can talk to a human being.

Is this how we should treat those who put their lives on the line for

our country? The Veterans Administration recently testified that it

needs a 13 percent increase in funding to address rising costs and

increased demand, but the President's budget proposes less than half of

that.

And now the President wants to further escalate the strain on our

already over-extended system by sending more soldiers off to Iraq? I am

outraged and I cannot mince my words. This is a national shame. This is

not how America repays its valiant heroes.

Madam Speaker, we must stop this madness. This surge, this escalation

will fail just as past surges have.

This conflict requires the diplomatic and political solution, not

just simply sending more troops into the fight. We cannot allow this

President to shatter the lives of more of our best and brightest. It is

time to bring our troops home.