Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to lend my strong support to this

bipartisan resolution supporting our men and women in uniform and

opposing the President's decision to send more troops into Iraq.

Last year, Congress united across party lines to say loudly and

clearly, the year of 2006 must be a year of significant transition in

Iraq. Rather than chart a new course, the President is proposing more

of the same. His actions will only deepen America's involvement in

Iraq's civil war.

Instead of acknowledging the facts on the ground, instead of

listening to the combatant commanders and the Iraq Study Group and

instead of hearing the American people's call for change, the President

has once again chosen to stick to his failed policies, and now he has

raised the risk by insisting more U.S. troops head to Iraq.

It has been 4 years, Mr. President. The American people have every

right to expect a change of course in Iraq, and it is your

responsibility to them and our men and women in uniform to stop

fighting Iraq's civil war.

As General Odom, the former head of the National Security Agency

under President Reagan, wrote this weekend, unless Congress speaks up,

and I quote, we may be doomed to 2 more years of chasing a mirage in

Iraq and possibly widening the war to Iran. We cannot let that happen.

Sending more U.S. troops to Iraq will not stabilize it or the region as

a whole. As the latest National Intelligence Estimate makes clear, Iraq

is becoming more polarized and violent, not less. Sending more American

troops to Iraq without stronger Iraqi leadership will only lead to

further chaos.

My consistent opposition to this troop surge is built upon years of

hearings in the House Armed Services Committee, congressional briefings

and five trips to the region, including three to Iraq, witnessing the

war firsthand and speaking with our troops and commanders on the

ground.

I have watched the President plead his case to the American people,

trying to justify why more troops will save his failed policy; but I am

consistently disappointed by the stubbornness exhibited by an

administration that has failed every step of the way.

I have stated from the beginning of the war that the Commander in

Chief has the responsibility to define a well-articulated mission that

has the support of the American people and an exit strategy to bring

our troops home sooner and safer. He has neither.

Top military commanders in Iraq, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group and

the American people all agree that sending more troops to Iraq will not

end the civil war. They understand the Iraqi Government needs to take

responsibility for securing their own country, and we should

immediately begin a strategic redeployment of U.S. troops in

conjunction with diplomacy that forces Iraq's neighbors to step up as

regional, responsible partners.

If the President sidesteps the Congress, he does so at his own peril;

and, sadly, it is the men and women of our Armed Forces and their

families who will pay the highest price.

I believe it is grossly irresponsible to send more troops to Iraq

when only two thirds of our Army's up-armored Humvees in Iraq and

Afghanistan have been fitted with the latest anti-IED protective kits.

That is over 4,000 Humvees without the right equipment.

General Pace has indicated that all armored vehicles will not be up-

armored until July, well after the President's surge has occurred.

This is why I am an original cosponsor of the Meehan legislation that

requires the President to ask Congress for an up-or-down vote if he

plans to raise troop levels in Iraq and why I am proud to support this

legislation today.

I will continue to challenge the President to abandon his flawed

troop surge policy, and I urge my colleagues to support this important

resolution. We owe it to our troops and to our conscience.

If the gentleman will yield, I just wanted to respond,

since you were so nice to quote me.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is, as we all know, the Iraq Study Group had a

very comprehensive strategy, but it was a radical departure from what

the President is proposing today in this surge. I think there was some,

you know, 70-plus recommendations in the Iraq Study Group, including

shifting the mission to training of the Iraqi Security Forces and a big

emphasis on diplomacy. So I don't think it is fair for the gentleman to

cherry-pick a paragraph out of what the Iraq Study Group says.

But with all due respect, I will tell you what the Iraq Study Group

recommended is not what the President is doing now. Frankly, the

President has rejected the Iraq Study Group recommendations, and I

think that to suggest that he is going along with the Iraq Study Group

recommendations is really not correct.

Well, yielding myself some time, I don't disagree with

you, but one recommendation out of some 70-odd does not make the Iraq

Study Group what the President is doing.

Madam Speaker, at this time I yield myself as much

time as I may consume.

I was interested in my colleague, the last speaker's questions, the

question about why do we have a nonbinding resolution and does it have

any significance. I should say, no one should minimize the significance

of this resolution. Passage by a bipartisan majority of the House of

Representatives of this resolution opposing the President's plan to

escalate the war in Iraq would be a major turning point in the war

debate.

Despite the fact that it is nonbinding, passage would have enormous

significance. This bipartisan resolution is serving as the basis for

the first real debate on the President's flawed Iraq war policy since

the war began nearly 4 years ago. Last November, the voters sent

President Bush a loud and unmistakable message about Iraq, but the

President didn't listen.

As his announcement of an escalation of the war showed, passage of

this bipartisan resolution is a second

chance for the President to hear a strong, clear message that cannot be

ignored. Passage of this bipartisan resolution will send another clear

message: No more blank checks for the President on Iraq.

In addition, passage of a nonbinding resolution opposing the

President's escalation plan is only the first step in the Congress,

demanding a changing of course in Iraq. When this resolution containing

fewer than 100 words passes, we will take the country in a new

direction in Iraq. A vote of disapproval will set the stage for

additional legislation, which will be coming to the House floor.

Furthermore, what is surprising, as I see my colleagues from the

other side trot forward one after another, I have to remind them that

in their 12 years in the majority, House Republicans passed hundreds,

hundreds of nonbinding resolutions, including in very similar

situations.

For example, on October 30, 1995, the House Republican leadership

brought to the floor and passed H. Res. 247, a nonbinding resolution

repudiating President Clinton's pledge to deploy up to 20,000 troops to

Bosnia as part of a peacekeeping force. I will remind my colleagues,

Kosovo is about to be declared independent because the United States

and NATO countries interceded and stopped the genocide there. That is a

perfect example of wrongheaded policy that Democrats were able to put

forward.

Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may

consume.

I just want to rise to close this debate from our side and say how

impressed I have been by the debate that I have heard today. It has

been about 11 hours. We are going to have tomorrow and debate on Friday

and Thursday, and this is the first real serious debate we have had

about the President's policies in Iraq since the vote in October of

2002.

This week the House is considering a bipartisan resolution introduced

by Representative Ike Skelton of Missouri, Tom Lantos of California,

and Walter Jones of North Carolina, which supports our troops and

opposes the President's plan to add 21,500 more combat troops in Iraq.

People have talked quite a lot tonight about the size and the scope

of the resolution, but it is elegant and it is certainly spare in the

fact that it is about 100 words, but it is significant because of what

it says.

The resolution is very straightforward. It says:

``Resolved by the House of Representatives that:

``(1) Congress and the American people will continue to support and

protect the members of the United States Armed Forces who are serving

or who have served bravely and honorably in Iraq; and

``(2) Congress disapproves of the decision by President George W.

Bush announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000

additional United States combat troops to Iraq.''

Those supporting this bipartisan resolution strongly support our

troops and our veterans. Let us be clear on this one fundamental

principle. We are honoring the service of our troops by asking the

difficult questions about this war. In conducting this debate, we must

be ever mindful of the sacrifices our military personnel and their

families are making during this war and the toll it is taking on them

and their families and our veterans. Each Member must determine for

themselves, in a manner worthy of our troop's sacrifice, whether the

President's plan will succeed in making Iraq more stable.

I, for one, do not believe it will, and I strongly believe and hope

that my colleagues will support this resolution and the debate that is

coming forth in the next 2 days