Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution

expressing disapproval of the President's decision to escalate the war

in Iraq.

During the past 4 years, I have embraced, stood by, and prayed with

Wisconsin families as they said their last goodbyes to their brave sons

and daughters and husbands and wives. Those fallen soldiers have served

with the utmost loyalty and courage, trusting decision-makers in

Washington, the President, his administration, and this Congress to do

the right thing. Like almost all of my colleagues, I have visited with

wounded troops at Walter Reed and at home and joined with families and

communities to send troops off to war and to welcome them back home.

All of them, all of them, the dead, the wounded, the deployed, the

returned, and their families, deserve political leaders who will make

decisions worthy of their enormous sacrifice. Mr. Speaker, we have

fallen well short of that goal, and we will only honor their sacrifices

when we acknowledge this and end the war.

I want to review just some of the things that we now know. We all

know that this is a war of choice, not a war of necessity. We all know

that Iraq posed no imminent danger to America that would justify what

this administration called a ``preemptive'' war. We all know that Iraq

had nothing to do with the tragic September 11 attacks that our Nation

suffered. We know that few in the world stood with America as we

undertook this nearly unilateral war. And we now know that our war in

Iraq has diverted our attention and our resources from efforts to

combat terrorist threats to our Nation.

And beyond that, we know now that worldwide resentment of our

military presence in Iraq has become a central recruiting tool for

terrorist organizations worldwide. Therefore, we know that this war

continues to make America less safe and more vulnerable.

What else do we now know? We now know that the planning and execution

of this war was wrought with enormous miscalculations. We know that

more than 3,000 American service members have lost their lives in Iraq,

and we know that between 56,000 and 61,000 Iraqi civilians have been

killed since the war began. And based on polls released Monday, we know

that 68 percent of Americans disapprove of the President's handling of

this war.

Mr. Speaker, I was among the first group of House Members to speak

out against the prospect of going to war in Iraq, and I voted against

authorizing the use of force in Iraq; and as an early and consistent

critic of the war, I understand the importance of offering a new course

in Iraq. We must bring an end to our military occupation and replace it

with a program of humanitarian relief, rebuilding political

stabilization, and diplomatic engagement. We must participate in a

robust regional diplomatic effort, including direct discussions with

Syria and Iran, to promote stability in Iraq. And I think that this

effort will be well received by Iraq's neighbors because regardless of

whether these countries are close allies of the United States or not,

Iraq's neighbors have more to gain if Iraq is stabilized and more to

lose if it is not.

We must also heed the advice of many, including the Iraq Study Group,

and acknowledge that other conflicts in the Middle East require our

attention and leadership if the region is to achieve lasting stability.

Therefore, we must also initiate a new push for Arab-Israeli peace. I

believe that Congress has not only the right but the responsibility to

assert its constitutional role as a co-equal branch of government in

overseeing the conduct of this war and bringing it to an end. In doing

so, I believe all options, including using the power of the purse,

should be on the table.

The United States is the lone superpower in the world today. And

along with that awesome power comes responsibility to humankind.

America's reason for maintaining its superpower status must be to

export the best of our democratic system of governance and the hope of

the American Dream to the rest of the world. But these cherished ideals

cannot be exported through force. We must teach and lead by example

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution expressing

disapproval of the President's decision to escalate the war in Iraq.

During the past 4 years I have embraced, stood by, and prayed with

Wisconsin families as they said their last goodbyes to their brave sons

and daughters, husbands and wives. Those fallen soldiers have served

with the utmost loyalty and courage, trusting decision-makers in

Washington--the President; his administration and this Congress--to do

the right thing. Like almost all of my colleagues, I have visited with

wounded troops at Walter Reed and at home, and joined with families and

communities to send troops off to war and to welcome them back home.

All of them, all of them--the dead, the wounded, the deployed, the

returned, their families--deserve political leaders who make decisions

worthy of their enormous sacrifices. Mr. Speaker, we have fallen well

short of that goal, and we will only honor their sacrifices when we

acknowledge this and end the war.

I want to review just some of the things that we know. We all know

that this is a war of choice, not a war of necessity. We all know that

Iraq posed no imminent danger to America that would justify what this

Administration called a ``pre-emptive'' war. We all know that Iraq had

nothing to do with the tragic September 11 attacks that our Nation

suffered. We know that few in the world stood with America as we

undertook this nearly unilateral war. We now know that our war in and

occupation of Iraq has diverted our attention and our resources from

our multi-faceted efforts to combat terrorist threats to our Nation and

its allies. And beyond that, we now know (based upon last year's

declassified intelligence estimates) that worldwide resentment of our

military presence in Iraq has become a central recruiting tool for

terrorist organizations worldwide to increase their ranks. Therefore,

we know that this war continues to make America less safe and more

vulnerable as long as it persists.

What else do we now know? We now know that the planning and the

execution of the war following our invasion were wrought with enormous

miscalculations. We now know that billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars

have been lost or squandered through no-bid contracts, lack of

accountability measures and lack of Congressional oversight under the

previous Republican majority. We know that more than 3,000 American

service members have lost their lives in Iraq. We know that between

56,000 and 61,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed since the war began.

And, based on polls released Monday, we know that 68 percent of

Americans disapprove of the President's handling of the war in Iraq and

72 percent of Americans believe that things are going badly in Iraq.

The situation in Iraq today has variously been called an all-out

civil war or more simply a state of chaos.

For years many Americans, including many members of this Congress

from both parties, gave this war a chance. It is time for this

administration to give peace a chance. It is time for the President to

pay attention to the vast yet still growing majority of Americans that

want us to get out of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I was among the first group of House Members to speak

out against the prospect of going to war in Iraq. I voted against

authorizing the use of force in Iraq, and as an early and consistent

critic of the war, I understand the importance of offering a new course

in Iraq. Many of my colleagues have introduced bills that would

redeploy our troops in a responsible manner within a reasonable time

frame, while focusing on aggressive diplomatic efforts to stabilize the

Middle East. A number of these bills and resolutions establish concrete

benchmarks for the Iraqi government. It is long overdue for this

Administration to start paying attention to these alternative

proposals, that chart a new course in Iraq. I believe that we must

redefine our mission in Iraq. We must bring an end to our military

occupation and replace it with a program of humanitarian relief,

political stabilization, and diplomatic engagement. We must participate

in a robust regional diplomatic effort, including direct discussions

with Syria and Iran, to promote stability in Iraq. And I think that

effort would be well received by all Iraq's neighbors, because

regardless of whether these countries are close allies of the United

States, or not, Iraq's neighbors have more to gain if Iraq is

stabilized and more to lose if it is not.

We must also heed the advice of many, including the Iraq Study Group,

and acknowledge that other conflicts in the Middle East require our

attention and leadership, if the region is to achieve lasting

stability. Therefore, we must also initiate a new push for Arab-Israeli

peace.

I believe Congress not only has the right, but the responsibility, to

assert its constitutional role as a co-equal branch of government in

overseeing the conduct of this war and bringing it to an end. Our

Constitution explicitly authorizes Congress the power to declare war

and to raise and support armies. If Congress is given the power to make

wars, we must also exercise our power to end wars. In doing so, I

believe all options, including using ``the power of the purse,'' should

be on the table.

The United States is the lone superpower in the world today. Along

with that awesome and unprecedented power comes responsibilities to

humankind. America's reason for maintaining her superpower status must

be to export the best of our democratic system of governance and the

hope of the American Dream to the rest of the world. But these

cherished ideals can't be exported through force. We must teach and

lead by example.

Mr. Speaker, while I support the resolution, I strongly believe

Congress needs to do more to represent the will of the people and

pursue all options that would lead to an end to this occupation and

this war.