Mr. Speaker, the young men and women who joined the

Armed Forces after 9/11 out of a sense of duty and love for our country

are just like my son Michael, who joined the military because of those

terrible attacks. I am proud and heartened by their commitment to

service and patriotism, just as I am proud of my own son's commitment,

and I am concerned about their safety and well-being, just as I was

about Michael's when he was in the service.

When I talk about supporting our troops, it is not rhetorical, it is

personal. And it is with great sadness and steely resolve that I stand

up here tonight on the issue of Iraq and the President's plan to

escalate that conflict. I am saddened because the misguided and

mismanaged conflict has become a tragic disaster and a genuine

threat to Mideast stability and global security. The escalation will

cause more violence in the Middle East and will weaken our Nation.

I am resolved, because it is our duty as the Congress of this great

Nation to check and balance the power of the President on any issue we

believe harmful to this country. This administration insists on finding

a military answer rather than changing this failed approach and

pursuing the diplomatic and political solutions necessary to bring an

end to the violence.

Unfortunately, the President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq will

not bring success there, nor make the United States more secure. In

fact, the proposal means a further distraction from the mission in

Afghanistan and the need for a tougher, smarter approach to the global

war on terrorism. The President's proposal puts more U.S. lives at

risk, further stretching the readiness of our ground forces and

increasing the drain on our Treasury.

President Bush's plan is opposed by military experts, by Republicans

and Democrats in both Chambers of Congress, and by the vast majority of

our country. That is why I rise in strong support of the resolution

under consideration in this body.

The resolution has two straightforward provisions: continuing support

for those American soldiers who have served or are currently serving in

Iraq; and disagreeing with the President's plan to escalate the

conflict.

Supporting our troops is my top priority, not just because it is our

duty and responsibility, but because it is personal to me and my

family.

Recently the Washington Post reported that the Marine Corps and Army

brigades that would be sent to Iraq under the President's plan are

short of body armor, vehicles, and other important equipment. That

shows just how desperate the President's misguided plan is. Military

action should never be executed in desperation.

We must transfer the responsibility for establishing and maintaining

law and order on the streets of Iraq to the Iraqis. Training those

Iraqi units must be done outside of Iraq. This will mean more troops

trained more quickly and will lessen the likelihood that Iraqi army and

police turn to dangerous militias and death squads.

The members of our Armed Forces who have served in Iraq have done so,

bravely and honorably. Unfortunately, the President's strategy in Iraq

has not matched the commitment with which our troops have served in

that country.

We must begin a responsible redeployment of our troops out of Iraq on

a public timeline that makes sense, while pursuing political and

diplomatic solutions. Yet the President has steadfastly refused to

engage in the political and diplomatic efforts necessary to bring a

resolution to the violence in Iraq.

Both Republicans and Democrats agree that we need a new direction in

Iraq. I will continue to push for that new direction while always

putting our troops first.

This resolution is an important first step. I stand with resolve in

opposing President Bush's plan for an escalation in Iraq