Thank you, Congressman Hunter, for your

leadership for our troops and for your son's service in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of our men and women serving in

the United States Armed Forces and in opposition to House Concurrent

Resolution 63, a resolution that claims to support the troops but

opposes reinforcements. To truly support our troops, we must provide

the equipment and sufficient personnel requested by their commander,

General David Petraeus.

I believe that we must triumph in the global war on terrorism, that

victory in Iraq is the only option, and that America's survival is at

stake. My convictions are deeply derived from personal experience and

from historical perspective.

My concerns have been developed as a member of the Armed Services

Committee, through which I have visited Iraq six times, as a 31-year

veteran of the Army Reserves and Army National Guard, and as the proud

parent of an Iraq veteran.

Less than a year after the war in Iraq began, my eldest son, Captain

Alan Wilson, was deployed across Iraq, where he served honorably for 1

year. Alan worked for young girls to be able to attend schools. He has

been a trusted military advisor to me regarding life on the front lines

in Iraq. Alan today continues to serve in the South Carolina Army

National Guard.

In addition to Alan, my younger three sons are also in the military.

My wife Roxanne and I appreciate their dedication to protecting

American families.

The decision to support continued efforts in Iraq is not one I made

lightly. In the end, however, it is the only viable solution. Retreat

is not an option.

Defeat is not an option. There is no end but victory.

I was truly transformed by September 11th, and I live with its

ramifications every day. I sincerely believe we are faced with fighting

the terrorists overseas today, or we will face them in the streets of

America tomorrow.

The attacks of September 11th were not isolated, random events. Our

enemy is highly intelligent, well financed, and committed to the

destruction of our freedoms.

Terrorists have declared war on the American people. We have a choice

of opposing them overseas or fighting them again here in America. The

concept that America's retreat in Iraq will bring an end to sectarian

violence and terrorist activity in the region ignores history.

Premature retreat will embolden the enemy and make us more vulnerable

to attacks.

We have seen it happen before. Withdrawals from Beirut and Mogadishu

led to the 1993 World Trade Center attack, the 1998 embassy bombings

across Africa, the 2000 bombings of the USS Cole and ultimately

September 11, 2001.

Al Qaeda has openly stated Iraq is the central front in the war on

terrorism. Osama bin Laden himself has said, ``The issue is big and the

misfortune is momentous. The most important and serious issue today for

the whole world is this third world war. I say to you that the war will

be won either by us or by you. If it's the former, loss and disgrace

will be your lot for all eternity, and, Allah be praised, this is the

way the wind is blowing. If it is the latter, you should read the

history books. We are a nation that does not remain silent over

injustice, and we will seek blood vengeance all lifelong. Not many days

and nights will pass before we take blood vengeance, like we did on 9/

11,'' end of quote of Osama bin Laden.

We ignore bin Laden's words to the peril of American families.

All of this is not to say that Members of Congress do not have an

obligation to question foreign policy. As elected public officials, it

is our duty to do so. If by conscience one disagrees with our

direction, he or she has a responsibility to put forth an alternative

plan.

An alternative plan, however, is not what we are debating today.

Instead, the Democrat leadership has put aside 36 hours of debate for a

resolution that provides no substantive solutions.

Our men and women in uniform deserve better. Their families deserve

better. These men and women deserve to know that America supports them,

that Congress will provide requested equipment and personnel, and that

we are all committed to their victory.

There is no magic bullet, no cure-all pill, but the fact remains that

we must endure. The stakes are too high, the consequences of defeat too

catastrophic. As men and women elected to represent our constituencies

and provide for their well-being, it is our responsibility to look out

for the safety of American families.

In conclusion, God bless our troops. We will never forget September

11. Our thoughts and prayers are with the late Congressman Charlie

Norwood, his wife, Gloria, his family, his staff and his constituents.