Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the

challenges we face as a Nation, and to urge the Members of this House

to confront those challenges honestly and forthrightly.

As I do, I remind my colleagues that this House is not a debating

society. It is not a place to merely score political points or

rhetorical points. It is a place where we should confront the issues

that face our country and then act accordingly. This responsibility

rests not just with the Members individually, but with the majority

especially. We come to this floor not just to speak, opine, and orate.

We come here to set policy, to legislate and, most importantly, to act.

This resolution the majority, the Democrats, put before us today

presents us with a choice; but after we make that choice, nothing will

happen, nothing will change. We will have chosen to state our opinion,

but we will refuse to act on that opinion. Some will see this as a

tragedy; some, Madam Speaker, will see it as a farce.

This resolution is not serious. It is a political ploy rather than a

principled position. It is sound and fury that signifies nothing. It is

a cruel joke on those who sincerely want to leave Iraq before our

mission is finished, and it is an affront to those of us who wish to

succeed in Iraq. But while this politically motivated resolution

achieves nothing, it does have real and lasting consequences. Passing

this resolution will embolden our enemies, it will discourage our

friends, and it will disappoint our troops. It will raise questions

about our seriousness as a legislative body to anyone who actually pays

attention to our proceedings, and it will lead our enemies to question

our resolve and it will leave our men and women in uniform wondering

why we are sending them on a mission in which we do not believe, but

lack the political courage to cancel.

Mr. Speaker, I am surprised and disappointed that the majority party

would bring a resolution to the floor which condemns an action directed

by our Commander in Chief and his military advisers yet which neither

forbids that action nor offers an alternative course.

If the majority party, the Democratic Party, was being honest with

their supporters and with the American people, they would have a

straight up-or-down vote on whether or not to fund the initiative

ordered by the President. This is the way in which we should approach

our constitutionally defined responsibility in regard to war and peace.

Madam Speaker, I have often voiced my respect for my Democratic

colleagues on the floor, and as individuals I do respect and admire

them. However, I neither respect nor admire the manner in which their

leadership has chosen to frame the issue which they now place before

the House. My friends on the other side of the aisle have abdicated the

responsibilities of being in the majority.

They do not want to legislate. They do not want to act, they just

want to state an opinion. But they are stating it in a fashion that

will lead many to question our sincerity as Members of this House and

to doubt the effectiveness of the institution which we all love, and

they are now privileged to lead.

Madam Speaker, the majority in this body has the responsibility to do

more than just criticize. So, I ask, what is their plan? We don't know.

How will they achieve a stable Iraq? They won't say.

It is time for Democrats to step up and answer these questions. It is

easy to second-guess the decisions of former Congresses and the

President. It is easy to reconsider one's support and the support many

in this Congress and in their majority have voiced in the past of

placing additional troops in Iraq. But, what is easy isn't always right

and certainly not in this case.

Let there be no mistake. Our soldiers are engaged in combat this very

minute. Our military commanders have voiced support for the mission

that they have been asked to complete. General Petraeus, our commander

in Iraq, supports the surge of forces. Indeed he says he needs these

additional troops to succeed. Moreover, the declassified National

Intelligence Estimate makes clear the disaster that would result from

failure in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, let us consider what will happen if the Democrats are

successful in undermining the mission and the objectives of the surge.

What would it mean? What effect would this have on our forces? What

would be the implications for our Nation and the region?

Well, Madam Speaker, at a practical level, it would certainly mean

that our enemies would know they have weakened the will and resolve of

the American people. They would take this as a lesson and a guide for

the future. At a tactical level, it would likely increase the level of

insurgent activity aimed at destroying our forces. Additionally, it

would also mean that, lacking reinforcement, our current forces would

be stretched even further.

Strategically adopting this resolution would undermine the

credibility of the United States. It will make the region more chaotic

and dangerous than it is today. I remember many Members of the majority

party calling for an increase in the size of our force in Iraq not so

long ago. I remember numerous statements by Members from the other side

of the aisle that said the alternatives to success were too horrible to

contemplate. They were right, but now those concerns seem to be no

longer operative.

I am under no illusions that we face an easy road ahead in Iraq.

Quite frankly, it is the greatest challenge our Nation has faced in a

generation. However, the alternative to showing resolve in Iraq is

defeat in the central front in the war on terror. That will be

disastrous for the Iraqis, threatening for our friends in the region,

and dangerous for the security of our own country.

That is why this resolution is so disturbing. Democrats want to have

it three ways. They want to criticize the President's plan, offer none

of their own, and then refuse to let our side of the aisle offer a

proposal for consideration by this body. A nonbinding resolution is no

plan for the future. It is a plan for the next election.

In the next few days, I will continue to engage in this debate and

outline what I believe to be the real challenges and choices that we

face, and why we must support the surge in forces. I hope that in this

debate my side persuades my colleagues to reject this resolution.

But if they are not persuaded, then I hope they will have the

political courage to act, as opposed to just talk; that they will

legislate as opposed to just debate. I hope they will discharge their

duties as a majority by laying out and enacting their strategy, as

opposed to merely criticizing the President and complicating a

dangerous situation faced by our forces in the field