Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to

this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, once again, the Republican leadership in the House of

Representatives has taken an issue of bipartisan concern and turned it

into an occasion for partisan division.

On the 1-year anniversary of the beginning of Operation Iraqi

Freedom, the leadership introduced a bill that claims to honor our

troops--at the same time that our Armed Forces and veterans are being

shortchanged in the budget that is under consideration in this body.

I strongly oppose this resolution for two important reasons.

First, it fails to properly acknowledge and honor the American troops

who are serving, have died, or have been injured in this war.

And secondly, it is a blatant attempt to cover-up the fact that

American soldiers went to war in Iraq because Iraq allegedly had

weapons of mass destruction that threatened America. And yet no such

weapons have since been found in Iraq.

Our troops--National Guard and Reserve and regular forces alike--

deserve more than one line in a resolution on the first anniversary of

a war. Their service and their sacrifice deserve to be honored, and

more importantly they deserve the resources to help them succeed with

the greatest degree of safety possible.

Had Democrats been afforded the opportunity to modify this

resolution, we would have offered our sincere condolences to the

families of the more than 500 soldiers killed and thousands wounded in

Iraq, given our troops in Iraq the body armor and armored vehicles they

need to keep them safe, and continued to press for a true international

coalition to relieve the United States of its nearly unilateral burden

in Iraq.

I am a proud cosponsor of the Democratic Salute to Veterans and the

Armed Forces Act, a comprehensive package of benefits designed to honor

the contributions of those who have served America in the Armed Forces.

The legislation ensures that those who are serving today have

incentives to continue serving, those who served in previous conflicts

are properly honored, and those who choose to serve in the future are

coming into a system that is the best in the world.

As I said at the outset, I also oppose this resolution because it is

a blatant attempt by the Bush administration to distort the public's

understanding of why America went to war.

Americans did not die in Iraq to punish Saddam Hussein for his

reprehensible and vile actions, such as gassing the Kurds in 1988 or

flooding the Arab marshlands. Those actions clearly did not pose an

imminent threat to the security of the United States, especially not in

the year 2003. And yet those are the actions that this partisan House

resolution today speaks to. Americans would not have believed that

those actions warranted a military attack in Iraq last year.

President Bush warned Americans that Iraq posed an imminent threat to

the security of the United States that could only be deflected by a

unilateral military strike against Iraq. Today, the House seeks to bury

this crucial piece of history.

The President provided intelligence that has not been discredited to

justify the attack on Iraq. It must never be forgotten that American

soldiers attacked Iraq because the President said that it had weapons

of mass destruction that endangered our security.

The Republican leadership sponsored this resolution today hoping to

later attack Democrats who vote against it. But I for one will not join

them in their partisan charade that brings shame on the People's House.

My Democratic colleagues and I will continue to articulate our concerns

for America's armed forces, for America's veterans, and for America's

security.