Mr. Speaker, I join the authors of this

resolution in commending the Iraqi people for their courage in the face

of oppression and in praising the valiant service of the United States

and coalition forces in Iraq. We are as proud as we could possibly be

of our troops, their sacrifice and their service.

But to put forth this partisan resolution in this way is both an

affront to our troops and a disservice to our country, sowing division

where there should be unity.

This resolution is not necessarily objectionable because of what it

says, but because of what it omits. There is no reference, for example,

to the mid-course correction that is called for in terms of financial

accountability, contracting practices, securing international

cooperation, and repairing our relationship with long-standing allies

whose support is integral to our ultimate success.

The minority has been denied the opportunity to improve this bill, to

give our troops the body armor they need, for example, to achieve pay

equity for National Guard and Reserve personnel, to provide much needed

health care and benefits for our wounded servicemen and -women, and to

offer condolences to the families of those killed in Iraq.

This resolution rightly affirms our support for the Iraqi people as

they adopt an interim constitution that upholds the values of open

debate and democracy. How ironic that this very bill is structured to

shut down discussion and debate.

The rule rammed through by the majority is not only a closed rule,

making it impossible to offer a Democratic substitute, but it also

eliminates the right to offer a motion to recommit with instructions.

That takes to a new level the procedural abuses that have become almost

routine in this House.

At stake is the manner in which we, as members of the House, are

permitted to express our encouragement. We can support our troops

serving in Iraq, yet still debate how to extend support to them and

their families and to hasten the day when they can return. We can

support the Iraqi people, yet still debate how best to ensure the

development of a stable, democratic form of governance. To debate such

issues does not reflect a lack of patriotism. To the contrary, it's a

celebration of it.

We should be proud, Mr. Speaker, of the progress we have made in

Iraq. At the same time we should address the deficiencies in our prewar

intelligence and our post-war occupation plan.

No one disputes that the world is better off with Saddam Hussein

gone, but we are doing our troops and the American people a grave

disservice if we perpetuate the illusion that they are somehow ``safe''

or that our mission in Iraq is accomplished. Many difficult tasks still

lie ahead, and glossing over the serious questions that remain

unaddressed by this administration jeopardizes our mission to secure

and stabilize Iraq.

I urge the Republican leadership to honor the collaborative and

unifying approach that we are urging on the people of Iraq. This body

should support our troops and lead by example, and this resolution

falls short on both counts.