Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most difficult periods of

time that I have had, because I do not get angry when the majority

drafts bills in order to embarrass Democrats. I think that goes with

the job. But I think it is really insulting and embarrassing when they

use the troops as a vehicle to embarrass us.

There is nobody on either side of the aisle that will challenge the

deep respect that we have for the men and women in our Armed Forces.

But when the majority drafts a bill and says this is a Republican bill,

you know that there is something crummy about it. You just have to look

and find out what it is.

So they start saying all of these things that we agree to; but then

they say, and it is a safer world as a result of Saddam Hussein being

captured. It would seem to me that the lives of Americans that are on

the line, their safety, that if there is anything that we as Democrats

and politicians could find as sacred, if we just wanted to commend them

and their families and their loved ones, that we would go out of our

way to make certain that we do not put anything in there that could be

described by political pundits as a poison pill. We should run it by

Democrats and Republicans and say, Is there anything at all offensive

in this because we do not want this to be controversial?

I am so glad I was not a fly on the wall when the Republican

leadership put this together because in my heart I do not truly believe

that they wanted to find some way to laud the troops, but they wanted

some way to try to find to embarrass Democrats. To use our military is

one of the cheapest things that I think you can do.

Let us talk about who these military people are that we are lauding.

This is one of those things I learned on Lennox Avenue when I was a

hoodlum. There are always some people talking about, Let's go to fight.

Let's settle this. Bring them on and we're not going to tolerate

anything except total victory. But when it comes time to get involved

in that fight, they are the same ones saying, ``You go ahead in the

fight, I'll hold your coat.''

There is a lot of talk about shared sacrifice, but I hope we take a

look and see who are the people who are volunteers, that is,

volunteering putting their lives on the line each and every day. I

remember in June of 1950 I was in Fort Lewis, Washington, and we were

alerted that the Second Infantry Division was going to go to Korea to

fight the North Koreans. Not one of us ever said, ``What is the fight

about? What is the war about?'' We only knew that we were warriors, we

were military people; and when that flag went up, we saluted it.

I go off and see the Reservists. I go off and see the National Guard

going to Iraq. Not one of them has asked the political question as to

why are we going over there. Yet I think that we have the political

responsibility when we endorse the wars to find out not only why are we

doing it but we have a political responsibility to be satisfied that it

is the right thing. If we differ about that, that is what America is

all about. That is what the Congress is all about. But you do not put

that controversy in a bill when these military people do not have the

options to discuss whether the war is right or wrong. They have the

responsibility to obey the Commander in Chief.

I have taken a little survey along with the gentleman from Missouri

(Mr. Skelton) about who is fighting this war and these people that we

are commending. Believe me, they did not sign up to get rid of Saddam

Hussein. As evil as this guy may be, one day some of us may be asked

the question, Was it worth 550 American lives or 3,000 people that are

in our heart, some with and some without Purple Hearts? One day someone

would ask, where did they come from? Did they enlist to fight

terrorism, or did they enlist because there were no jobs available? Are

these minorities from the inner cities that are looking for a better

way of life but accept their responsibility as to why they enlisted? Do

they come from districts such as the gentleman from Missouri's

district, the rural areas where unemployment is rampant? And why do we

find there are more blacks, almost twice as many as the population, in

the Army and how does that compare where in my city 50 percent of the

African American men are unemployed?

Do the Members not think that had something to do with the

enlistments? Do the Members not think they wanted to send a check home

to their mom because they could not get a job? Do the Members not think

they want the educational benefits to improve themselves, as I did as a

high school dropout?

And why do we have to commend them when we find out just today that

12 percent of the Nation's population is black but they represent 20

percent of those that were killed. Black deaths in the Iraq war exceeds

the rate of Vietnam. Go to Hispanics, we see the same thing. Go to

white Americans and we see the same thing.

So we do not need a political resolution to try to polarize this

Congress. We know we love and respect those people who salute that

flag. And to put in a political controversial clause to attempt to

embarrass us is just not going to work.

How low can you get when you use the military as a way to attempt to

embarrass your colleagues?

Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield for edification

since he is bewildered?

Mr. Speaker, the chairman may be fascinated by my war

experiences. I did not talk about it. When he has time, I will give him

more time than he will ever want to hear about it.

What I am saying is this: We have an opportunity to laud our service

people. You know there is one issue on this floor, and that is whether

or not we were misled in getting involved in this. I do not care which

side one is on. We want to laud the servicemen. Why would you put

Saddam Hussein in this resolution? Why did you not leave him out so

that we could have unanimous consent that we laud the military? You

deliberately put Saddam Hussein in there to divide us and not to bring

us together.