Mr. Speaker, as the war in Iraq continues, our military

personnel, veterans and their families face a myriad of hardships. Our

troops in Iraq have lacked adequate body armor and armored vehicles to

keep them safe. Their families have to scrape by because of the pay

disparity between serving in the military and in civilian life. When

the troops return home, they do not have the health care and benefits

they have earned through their service to our country.

Republicans proposed a resolution to supposedly honor our troops. But

it does not truly acknowledge the real hardships our troops and their

families face. It merely ``commends the members of the United States

Armed Forces and Coalition forces for liberating Iraq and expresses its

gratitude for their valiant service.''

Republicans also say in their resolution we are safer now that Saddam

Hussein has been removed from power. But we cannot claim the

mission is accomplished. We must continue to fight the battle against

terrorism to ensure safety and stability in Iraq. And we must be honest

about the true task ahead of us, or risk America's credibility with our

international partners diminishing further.

Ironically enough, on the same day Republicans claim to honor our

troops, they approved a budget proposal for the next year that would

slash funding for military pay, health care, education and training for

military personnel, veterans and their families. It also fails to

extend imminent danger pay and family separation pay for troops in Iraq

past December 31 of this year.

I supported an alternative resolution that would appropriately honor

the military personnel and veterans who have served our country so

courageously. It praises the work our troops are doing and urges the

President to provide protective gear for our troops, ensure quality

health care to treat both short- and long-term injuries among our

troops, and correct pay disparities among civilian and military pay for

guards and reservists.

We need to stand behind our courageous men and women in uniform who

are bearing the burden of this military action in Iraq. Supporting our

troops and giving them the tools they need to carry out their mission

in Iraq is the only way to truly honor their service, courage and

sacrifice.