Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this resolution. Our troops

should not be a pawn in a political power play. This resolution is not

a simple statement of support for the incredibly valiant work of our

men and women in Iraq. It is a cynical, political tool to further the

agenda of the Bush Administration during this election year.

This resolution was pushed through the House of Representatives

without input from a single Democrat. I wanted to vote for a resolution

that truly recognizes the sacrifice of our troops and the importance of

living up to our commitments to them, but the Republican leadership

would not allow a vote on any other measure but their own. I refuse to

bow to the politization of the grave matter of our young people at war,

and for this reason I voted against the resolution.

Let me be clear: our troops deserve our qualified support as they

serve our Nation in such dangerous circumstances. But that support must

be more than empty words, it must be in promises kept.

I would have voted today for a resolution that reiterated our

commitment to providing our troops with the body armor and armored

vehicles they need to keep them safe, to immediately address the

intelligence deficiencies that continue to put our troops in further

danger, and to insist on a clearly articulated strategy for post-war

occupation and exit of Iraq.

This alternative resolution I supported included provisions to

eliminate the disparities in pay between our active duty military and

the National Guard and reservists, and provide the health care and

benefits our wounded veterans need when they come home. But the

Republican majority never allowed for a vote on this fair-minded

alternative.

Last week I sat in the Budget Committee and watched in shock as the

Republican members of the Committee voted on party lines to reject a

``Support Our Troops'' amendment that would have raised funding levels

for the military by $2.5 billion. This money would have been spent on

family separation pay, imminent danger pay, education funding for

military school children, and TRICARE military health coverage for

reservists, and military housing programs. How can we look our troops

in the eye and tell them Congress rejected actual funding that would

help them and their families through this difficult time, but instead

passed a relatively meaningless resolution of our support? This is

unconscionable.

I also strongly object to the clause in today's resolution claiming

that the ``world is safer'' as a result of the Iraq war. Mr. Speaker, I

disagree. Iraq is still in chaos. American soldiers, international

diplomats, and Iraqi civilians are being killed every day. And the

Administration is still a long way from pacifying Iraq or setting up a

stable government. The Administration made claims that Iraq was a base

of International terrorism and that turned out to be false.

Our troops deserve better than more empty words from Congress. On the

one-year anniversary of the start to this misguided war, they deserve

to be supported with sound policy, real dollars, and the commitment to

bring them home safely.