Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my

concerns about the process by which H. Res. 557 has been considered in

the House.

Once again, a small group in the House--the majority party on the

Rules Committee--has prevented a full and fair debate. Last night, I

submitted an amendment to the Committee for consideration. The first

part of my amendment would have struck the language in the resolution

claiming that the Iraq war has made the world safer, replacing it with

language about the deplorable and brutal regime of Saddam Hussein. The

second part would have added a fifth clause to the resolution,

commending the members of the Reserve and National Guard and their

families for their dedication and sacrifice, given the extraordinary

number of such members called to active duty and their length of

deployment in Iraq. Unfortunately, not only was my amendment not made

in order, but no amendments at all were made in order. In fact, the

minority does not even have the right to recommit this resolution with

instructions.

Let me be clear that there is no doubt that the world is better off

without Saddam Hussein and his horrible regime. But to put forth a

resolution stating that the world is safer because of the U.S. invasion

into Iraq, while claiming it ``should be'' bipartisan, is purely

partisan politics. I am shocked at the audacity of the Republican

leadership to force an up or down vote on a resolution with a clause

justifying the war in Iraq, bundled with provisions that every member

of this House supports--commending the Iraqis for their courage,

commending the adoption of an interim constitution, and supporting U.S.

and Coalition forces for their bravery. My amendment would have truly

made this resolution something members on both sides of the aisle could

support.

I also share the concerns of many of my colleagues that this

resolution does not acknowledge many of the questions surrounding the

justification that the Administration used for going to war in Iraq.

First, no weapons of mass destruction have been found. Second, CIA

Director Tenet has stated that he never said the threat coming from

Iraq was imminent, a claim that President Bush repeatedly made to the

American people. Third, the Administration's alleged ties between Al

Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's regime have yet to be proven. In my view,

these discrepancies are the reason why the Republican leadership has

decided to take up this resolution. I think that they believe if they

can get the House to agree that the world is safer because of the U.S.

invasion into Iraq, the war is justified. But I disagree wholeheartedly

with this flawed logic.

We should be spending our time talking about how to make our country

and world safer. We should be talking about the security of our

borders, of cargo, of our critical infrastructure. We should be talking

about truly supporting our troops by making sure they are taken care of

when they return to the U.S.--ensuring that they don't have to wait for

six months to get an appointment at the VA; ensuring that the veterans

who fought before them get the benefits they were promised; ensuring

that their loved ones will be taken care of when they pass on. We

should be talking about how to help the Reservists and members of the

National Guard who have been called to serve longer then they ever

envisioned, whose families need help paying the bills while the

soldiers are gone.

I have been moved by the bravery of the troops that have been

deployed from my district in New Mexico. They include the 52nd Engineer

Combat Battalion's Charlie Battery, the New Mexico National Guard's

1115th Transportation Company, a group of soldiers from the New Mexico

National Guard 3631st Maintenance Company, thousands of reservists, and

countless active duty. I will continue working in Congress to help

their families while they are gone and to help them with the transition

when they return.

Let's pass a resolution commending the bravery of our troops and

coalition forces, thanking their families, commending the Iraqis for

their courage in the face of a brutal regime and war, commending the

adoption of an interim constitution in Iraq--but let's allow for a full

debate and do it in a way that does not divide us. A resolution on the

one-year anniversary of the beginning of the war should not be used for

political purposes. Our armed forces, including the Reservists and

National Guard members I sought to commend, as well as the Iraqi

people, deserve better.