Mr. Speaker, it has been one year since the brave men and

women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces were ordered into Iraq. On a

daily basis, these brave service members are displaying tremendous

patriotism and courage. They and their families have made enormous

sacrifices, many even the ultimate sacrifice, to serve our Nation.

I continue to strongly support our troops serving us in Iraq,

Afghanistan, and around the world. My own district has seen the loss of

four fallen heroes who gave their lives in defense of our Nation: Jorge

Casanova, Atanacio Haro Marin, Francisco Martinez Flores, and Kelly

Bolor. Many more from my district have been injured. One of my

constituents, Eugene Serrano, was part of the unit that captured Saddam

Hussein.

Last month, I hosted a ceremony in my district to honor these fallen

heroes and all of our Nation's veterans--those who have lost their

lives, those who have put their lives on the line, and those who

continue to risk their lives in order to defend our Nation.

We should honor our troops and our veterans. However, I cannot

support the particular resolution before us today.

I oppose this resolution not because of what it says, but because of

what it does not say. It fails to express sorrow and condolences to the

families of the more than 550 service members that have died in Iraq,

over 415 of whom were killed after President Bush declared an end to

major combat in Iraq. It also lacks mention of the more than 3,500 who

have been wounded in Iraq.

Honoring our troops should go beyond mere words commending their

service. We should also eliminate disparities in pay between our active

duty military and the National Guard and reservists. Some reservist

families in my district are struggling to make ends meet while their

loved ones are serving our Nation abroad.

We should also provide the health care and benefits our wounded

service men and women earned when they come home. I've had the

privilege of visiting Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC, where

many of the wounded troops are receiving care upon returning from Iraq.

Some of these soldiers, many of who have little financial resources,

are facing substantial medical bills for injuries sustained during war.

We should also take steps to ensure that the families of fallen

soldiers have access to resources to cope with the loss of their loved

one. This includes adequate funds for bereavement costs and translators

for military personnel who visit families of fallen heroes whose first

language is not English. When military personnel arrived at the home of

one of the fallen service members from my district, his parents, like

all parents in the same situation, feared the worst. Unfortunately, the

parents were unable to fully understand why the uniformed military

members were visiting them because they did not speak English. They

feared for their son's condition. Language and cultural differences

should be acknowledged and addressed, especially when families are

hearing news that they have lost a loved one.

Finally, this resolution ignores the important steps that must be

taken to lay the foundation for a stable and secure Iraq. We should

immediately remedy the deficiencies in the intelligence on which our

troops rely and assemble a true international coalition so that the

United States does not have to consume all of the costs and nearly all

of the casualties. Doing so will help secure the region and bring our

troops safely home.

Today, we had an opportunity to truly honor our troops with words and

action. Unfortunately, this resolution accomplishes nothing more than

dividing us at a time when we should be united.

I continue to support our troops. I want to extend sincere gratitude

to them and their families for their extraordinary sacrifices.