Mr. Speaker, as it should be, military

service is being held in high esteem. What strikes me when I visit our

military bases and Walter Reed Army Medical Center, is the age of those

who have answered the call to duty throughout America's history. In

this war, as in those of our past, we send our young. They are the best

of the best. Their motto might well be, in the words of Alexander Pope,

``Act well your part, therein all honor lies.''

Spc. Jeffrey Wershow, a National Guardsman from Gainesville, Florida,

is a shining example of Pope's words. He was a patriotic young man with

passion and heart who left this world too early. His dreams included

law school and public service. Spc. Wershow wanted to change the world,

and he did.

I stand 100 percent behind our troops. All those who deserve our

appreciation, our respect, and our compassion. The brave men and women

in uniform who have volunteered to defend our country are in my

thoughts, and in my prayers. I pledge to work to ensure that they have

all the resources necessary to help them accomplish their mission

quickly and safely so that they can return home to their families.

I want to salute the 566 U.S. troops killed in the year that troops

have been in Iraq. Our Nation is humbled by their allegiance, service

and sacrifice. I pray that their families will find comfort and peace.

To date, 3,254 U.S. troops have been physically wounded. I wish them a

speedy recovery and happiness as they return to their family and

friends. An untold number of troops will not bear physical scars from

this war, but will struggle with their time in Iraq when they return

home. I pledge that I will not forget their service and will stand with

them when they come home to America. Thousands of Iraqi civilian

casualties have been reported. I want the Iraqi people to know that my

heart goes out to them during this difficult period.

May God bless our troops and may God continue to bless America.