Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the

resolution before us today. I would like to first offer my gratitude to

those brave men and women who are fighting or have fought in Iraq and

Afghanistan. We owe you a debt which we can never repay.

Since the United States invaded Iraq, I have seen this as a high-

stakes gambit. If we were successful in not only defeating the Iraqi

Army, but in the more difficult task of establishing a democratic

government, we would be far down the road to affecting a paradigm shift

in the Middle East, one which would replace potentates, dictators, and

repression with representative governments, transparency, and

opportunities for both men and women.

If we were to fail, the cost would be incalculable. It would be a

reaffirmation for many in the world that the United States lacked the

fortitude to see a mission through to its completion. It would embolden

terrorists the world over; threaten those states in the Middle East,

such as Jordan and Israel, that are friends of the United States.

Regardless, the situation in Iraq is what it is. There is no question

Iraq is a petri dish for terrorists now. Our main nemesis in Iraq is

called ``al Qaeda in Iraq.'' Thus, our activities in both Iraq and

Afghanistan are now clearly linked to a global war on terror. There is

no other way to view the situation.

I am eager to build on the recent successes in Iraq. I truly hope

that we have turned a corner with the death of Zarqawi and the forming

of the government. If voter turnout is any indication, the Iraqi people

are eager for democracy. They had a higher voter turnout in Iraq than

we did in Virginia for our gubernatorial race. But make no mistake,

what we are trying to do in Iraq has been and will continue to be

extraordinarily difficult. Even with Zarqawi gone, there are many

dangerous people who will stop at nothing to stop us.

I don't support a public date of certain withdrawal from Iraq. Doing

so creates an untenable situation for our forces and our Iraqi allies

and presents a real gift of predictability to the enemy. But there has

to be a sense of urgency. We are in a war that we have to win, but we

cannot plod along indefinitely.

Our Founding Fathers had 13 years between the beginning of the

American Revolution, the ratification of the Constitution, and the

inauguration of George Washington. We don't have that luxury in Iraq.

Our troops are giving their lives in Iraq. Our country is spending

hundreds of billions of dollars. We can't pull the rug out from the

under the Iraqis, but we can't babysit the situation either. We don't

have time to waste on activities that are ineffective. We don't have

money to waste on bad equipment and services.

Some have charged that this Congress has been asleep at the wheel and

has done no oversight. That's not true. I have. Our committee has held

four hearings on contracting practices in Iraq, including a day for

whistleblowers at Halliburton, and I intend to hold more.

Our subcommittees, particularly the one chaired by Mr. Shays, have

held dozens of others. What we have found is a lot of mistakes in

management and oversight. But remember, this is the first time we have

contracted this extensively in a combat situation. Everything about

doing business, everything in a war zone is difficult and costly, and

it is disingenuous to deny this.

If we are going to see this mission through successfully, there must

continue to be vigorous, comprehensive, constant oversight to ensure we

stay on the right path. We should do everything we can to hasten the

day when Iraq is able to handle its own affairs. Our role in Congress

is to conduct the oversight that the people expect of us.