Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I

thank you for presiding over this important debate and for the

opportunity to address the House as this debate nears its conclusion.

Let's be clear about what is at stake today as we debate this issue.

Whether or not we are successful in winning the global war on terror

will define the future, and it will define this generation in the eyes

of future historians. Our resolve is being tested by clever enemies

with primitive philosophies of religion and government. When my

colleagues cast their vote today, they are sending a message about what

they believe America's capable of doing and about whether the global

war on totalitarianism is worth fighting.

Our actions here on the House floor are being watched not only by our

enemies, but by our friends and allies as well. The message we send

will be received by the coalition partners fighting with us, the people

and leaders of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Americans fighting for

peace and freedom who believe in their mission. This vote, I know, is

not being taken lightly, and believe me, it should not be taken

lightly. The resolution we are considering is clear and unambiguous. We

are declaring that the United States will prevail in the global war on

terror.

This war is not a war of choice, but one initiated and sustained by

the action of terrorists. It is being fought in many parts of the world

with all the diplomatic, cultural, financial and, when absolutely

necessary, military resources available to us. In places like Iraq and

Afghanistan, terrorists have chosen to make a stand. They understand

the only way they can defeat the United States is not in battle with

our soldiers, who are the best in the world, but in the battle of

public opinion. Information is the key weapon in that battle.

Over the week of Memorial Day, I was able to travel to both

Afghanistan and Iraq to see again firsthand our Nation's efforts to

combat terrorists and assist in the establishment of modern

democracies. Universally in both countries, the people we talked to,

including the leaders that we met with, told our delegation that

withdrawing American troops before democracy has had a chance to take

root would lead to disaster.

In Afghanistan, President Karzai believes that the southern part of

the country is keeping a lid on the Taliban precisely because of the

presence of our troops. He believes his countrymen uniquely understand

how important it is that our soldiers, American soldiers, maintain a

visible role, even as the day-to-day operations are often turned over

to our NATO allies. And while we were there, our ambassador was able to

report to President Karzai that both the Canadians and the Dutch had

been vigorously and successfully engaged the day before. But President

Karzai was equally vigorous in his sense that the commitment of America

was the

commitment that the Afghan people were worried about.

Today we will tell our friend, President Karzai, that America will

not abandon our Afghan friends, that we will not close that embassy

again and lock the door and walk away for 10 years.

In Iraq, which al Qaeda has call the central front, and that is their

quote, not mine, the central front in their war against the West, the

sentiment for America to stay is even more pronounced. In Baghdad I

spoke with Speaker Mashhadani, a Sunni politician, a leader who had

been very opposed to the United States coming to Iraq, but now believes

that the presence of the United States, again, until democracy takes

root, is essential to the establishment of democracy in that country.

And while visiting the newly formed Kurdish regional government in

Erbil, I spoke with those leaders who have recently put aside

generations of differences in favor of a unified Iraq. Officials from

the new Iraqi Government I met with gave me additional reasons to be

hopeful for the future. These elected leaders are committed to

governing. Their predecessors had been committed to a political goal in

each case, to write a Constitution, to conduct a temporary election, to

conduct a permanent election.

This government is the first democratically elected government in the

history of not just the country of Iraq that has only been in existence

since World War I, but the history of the people who live in this area

have never before had a permanent democratically elected government.

This government also happens to be a broad-based government that is

committed to serve.

I have said many times before, as many have said on this floor in the

last 2 days, that only the Iraqis are ultimately capable of solving

their problems. The only way to solve them is through increased

transparency, economic reform, and democratic participation in

government. None of this will be easy, and I have nothing but

admiration for Iraqi leaders who are undertaking these tasks in the

face of enormous personal risk.

It is in the context of this personal risk that I appeal to my

colleagues, who live peacefully and safely in the world's oldest

constitutional democracy, the United States of America, not to turn

their backs on the leaders of the world's newest democracy.