Mr. Speaker, the war in Iraq reached

another troubling milestone yesterday with the announcement that 2,500

American soldiers have now been killed in the 3-year conflict. In

Massachusetts alone, more than 35 families have mourned the loss of a

loved one, killed in action in places like Ramadi, Fallujah and Najaf.

And since President Bush declared an end to ``major combat

operations,'' more than 17,000 troops have been wounded in combat.

Every Member of Congress supports the heroic efforts of our troops in

Iraq, Afghanistan and around the globe. These brave men and women in

uniform, and their service to our country, should never be forgotten.

We have the finest armed forces in the world and they represent the

United States of America with remarkable courage, honor and dignity.

During a recent memorial service for a young soldier from western

Massachusetts who was killed in Iraq, a Marine Commander paid tribute

to our fallen service members by saying: ``we weep at their passing,

honor their service and cherish their memories.'' I would simply add

that we are also grateful for the enormous sacrifice they have made for

our nation.

We are here today in this historic chamber to discuss the future of a

war that has already taken so much from so many. A war that a majority

Americans now disapprove of.

In October 2002, when this institution first debated authorizing the

use of military force, I raised a number of concerns about a pre-

emptive war with Iraq including its cost, the lack of connection

between Saddam Hussein and 9/11, and the fact that Iraq was not a

credible threat to the United States. I also believed that a pre-

emptive strike would act as an effective recruiting tool for radical

Islamic fundamentalism worldwide. For these reasons, I was 1 of 133

House Members who against the Iraq war resolution.

Unfortunately, as I stand on the floor of the House, nearly 4 years

later, many of these concerns still exist. According to the non-

partisan Congressional Research Service (CRS), the war in Iraq has now

cost the U.S. taxpayer roughly $319 billion to date. That's $6.4

billion a month and more than $100,000 per minute. If you live in

Massachusetts, $9 billion of your money has been spent in Iraq. And

there is no end in sight.

I would point out to my colleagues that former White House economic

adviser Lawrence Lindsey lost his job for predicting that the war would

cost a mere $200 billion. From the start, the Bush administration has

not been straight with the American people about the cost of the war in

Iraq. And this partisan resolution does nothing to address that.

In fact, the White House has not been straight about most aspects of

the war from the existence of weapons of mass destruction to the threat

of the insurgency, and from Iraq's purchase of yellow cake uranium to

Saddam's ties to al-Qaeda. And with this resolution, House Republicans

will simply rubberstamp President Bush's poor planning and

mismanagement. I believe it is time for a new direction in Iraq.

More importantly, so do many military leaders. Marine Corps General

Anthony Zinni, Army Major General Charles Swannack, Army General John

Batiste, Marine Corps Lieutenant General Gregory Newbold and others

have all expressed real concerns about our future in Iraq. These are

individuals who were deeply involved in the planning and execution of

the war. And they do not like what they see.

As General Zinni recently said, ``we are paying the price for the

lack of credible plan. Ten years worth of planning were thrown away,

troop levels dismissed out of hand . . . These were strategic mistakes,

mistakes of policy made back here.''

Mr. Speaker, like most Americans, I believe it is time for a new

course in Iraq. I believe we need to develop an honorable exit

strategy. I will vote against this resolution to give President Bush an

open-ended commitment in Iraq. Let's bring the troops back home.