Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for

my colleagues here in the U.S. House of Representatives. I respect them

for their service and for their dedication to their constituents.

However, Mr. Speaker, I take offense that any member of this House

would stand here and challenge the patriotism of a colleague--such a

charge is unworthy of this institution and the democracy we fight for

every day. I refuse to allow anyone on the other side, as they have

done today and have since this war in Iraq began, to question--whether

directly or indirectly--my love of our country, my unwavering

commitment to our troops, and my firm belief that we must do whatever

necessary to defend the citizens of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I will oppose the resolution before us today. And, I do

so because I love this country and who we are and what we stand for. My

reason for opposing this particular resolution comes down to one word--

accountability. At every level, the Republican majority here in

Congress, has failed to hold this Administration accountable. It is

simply astonishing that most of my Republican colleagues have time and

time again simply bent to the will of the Administration and allowed

themselves to believe meaningless rhetoric without asking tough

questions. I urge my colleagues on the other side to abandon their

blind faith

in this Administration's rhetoric and instead demand accountability.

For it is through information, recognition of errors, and the

development of an honest plan that we will ultimately ensure our

success in Iraq.

Misjudgments and miscalculations have led to a conflict that

continues three years after the President declared ``mission

accomplished.'' History will judge the President and his cabinet for

their performance. But, it is our responsibility as members of Congress

to call for a clear plan going forward. It is past time that this

Administration implement a strategy to meet our mission and bring our

troops home, and it is past time that this Congress demand it.

Instead, this resolution supports a ``stay the course'' policy that

has failed our troops and failed our nation. We all want to see a safe

and democratic Iraq. However, the President's open-ended declaration to

stay as long as it takes--a policy that this resolution defends--will

not require the Iraqi government and the Iraqi people to make the tough

choices that need to be made. That is why we must make clear that our

military presence is contingent upon progress in the formation of a

stable and functioning Iraqi government. We have to make it clear that

we expect the Iraqis to take responsibility for their government and

for their security. We will support them, but the time for a serious

U.S. military presence is limited. To make that clear, we should begin

to bring our Reservists and National Guard home, and put in place a

strategy to bring the rest of our young men and women out of Iraq as

soon as possible.

My colleagues, today, we could have had the opportunity to discuss

these important policy issues, demand answers, and work together to

better define our objectives in Iraq and our strategy for completing

our mission. Instead, we are once again stuck in neutral--playing

politics with resolutions about whether Republicans or Democrats

support the troops and whether Republicans or Democrats are stronger

against terrorism. Let's be clear: we all support the troops and we are

all committed to fighting terrorism. That is not the issue--the issue

is the Bush Administration's failed policy in Iraq and how Congress--as

a separate and independent branch of government--should demand

accountability for their failures and demand a real strategy to achieve

success and bring our troops home. We owe this to our constituents. We

owe it to the brave Americans serving this country overseas. And, we

owe it to our great country and its legacy.