Mr. Speaker, I am deeply disappointed in the

Republican Congress' unwillingness to focus on the truth in Iraq.

Calling today's spectacle a true debate of ideas on Iraq does not pass

the ``straight face test.'' If House Republican leadership choose to

have a real debate on Iraq, Members of the House should be able to

offer alternatives and ideas. Instead, they have blocked all

alternatives by Democrats and for 10 hours the American people are left

with the same empty rhetoric they have been hearing from the House

Republicans on the floor for 3 years.

My constituents in the 37th District want a strategy in Iraq. They

want to know when our brave young soldiers will return home to their

families safely. Given this, I find it disingenuous for Republican

leadership to talk tough about the war on terror when this debate is

supposed to be about American troops in Iraq. It was the Republican

leadership who could not wait to divert resources from the war on

terror to chase after Saddam Hussein in the first place. Many Democrats

said this was a dangerous path, and sadly, that is exactly where we

find ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, I support withdrawing our troops at a specific time and

redeploying them to the periphery of the arena. Redeploying our troops

is the natural and timely evolution to our mission in Iraq. But now is

the time that we need to start the process and planning of bringing our

troops home. Our troops have contributed to the building of a

democracy, assisted in training an Iraqi police and military force and

overseen three elections as well as the drafting of a national

constitution. They have accomplished a great deal. And we have

supported them throughout.

I join the American people in their deep patriotism and love for our

great land, and I join them in their solemn appreciation for the

thousands of American families who have sacrificed a son or daughter.

However, our troops have been in Iraq for over 3 years. We knew that

when we entered this conflict that our troops were not going to be a

permanent fixture in Iraq. This was the understanding Congress had with

the administration and the American people. The men and women who have

given their lives in liberating Iraq have completed their mission and

they have done so with valor.

Now it is time for the Iraqi people to rebuild their communities and

it is time for us to make our communities whole again by bringing our

troops home.

The resolution today is not what the Republican leadership had

notified us of. I can only hope that the next Iraq debate on House

floor takes place both soon and with greater substance.