Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H. Res. 861. The

resolution declares that ``the United States is committed to the

completion of the mission to create a sovereign, free, secure and

united Iraq.'' That's a big job. Ask the British, who tried and failed

to do this in the 20th century, what a big job it is. While President

Bush has said repeatedly that when the Iraqis stand up we will stand

down, this resolution asserts that our troops will remain in Iraq

indefinitely. That is unfortunate.

A group of Republicans and Democrats tried to offer a more concrete

and meaningful alternative to this resolution, which would have

substituted the essence of H.J. Res. 55 for H. Res. 861. This is in

line with every benchmark set by President Bush. Unfortunately, we were

not allowed to offer an amendment.

Our approach is so reasonable that I believe 75 percent of the

American public would strongly support it. Our amendment would simply

require the President to develop and implement a plan for the

withdrawal of U.S. Armed Forces from Iraq in a reasonable time frame.

It does not give a specific date to complete a withdrawal. It does not

say to be out in 30 days or else. It just says try to define an end

point for the benefit of everybody. This is exactly in line with what

the President himself has stated; it supports his statements.

We are not taking a radical approach. It is a very modest approach, a

very mild approach. The reason that there was not a vote on our

amendment is that we would have won. So this entire exercise is

designed for politics. And men are dying. Women are dying! And we're

going broke--we spend $300 million every single day in Iraq, at the

same time programs here at home are being denied. So we're going to

have a financial crisis, and we'll have a political crisis.

I would like to see this effort taken out of the political realm

and put it into the realm of policy discussions. We need to look for

real solutions rather than just making political statements.