Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to

this resolution.

I say reluctant opposition--because I agree with much of what this

resolution says.

I support its statements about honoring the sacrifices of our troops

and their families. There's no question that our military is the most

professional fighting force in the world, and we are all grateful to

our men and women in uniform for putting their lives on the line for

our country.

I support the resolution's statements congratulating the new prime

minister upon forming his government and the Iraqi people for their

courage in participating in elections, and calling on the nations of

the world to work together for global peace.

I even agree with the statement that we should not set an arbitrary

date for the redeployment of our troops.

I opposed the Iraq war resolution, but I have resisted supporting an

artificial deadline for withdrawing troops. I believe that how we

withdraw is as important as when we withdraw. This means giving the

Iraqis time to get their newly installed permanent government up and

running and establish the means for international support. We must

exercise deep care in the way our country withdraws because leaving a

failed state in Iraq will deeply endanger our country.

But I profoundly disagree with the overall tone of the resolution and

disagree even more with the way this debate was conducted.

Mr. Speaker, a few months ago--in response to pressure from both

sides of the aisle--the Republican leadership promised a full debate on

Iraq.

What we got was certainly a long debate, but it was far from

``full.'' A full debate would mean that Members would have been able to

offer alternatives to this resolution. We would then have been able to

debate the merits of all the resolutions offered.

I had hoped to offer the bipartisan resolution I introduced with my

colleague Joe Schwarz of Michigan that recognizes political progress in

Iraq, including the establishment of a national unity government, but

also recognizes that more progress is needed, and that the Iraqis must

meet their own deadline for modifications to their new constitution.

As it is, the debate has been tightly controlled, and our only choice

is to vote up or down on a status quo resolution that doesn't focus on

Iraq and that doesn't reflect reality on the ground.

If this were a real debate on Iraq, it would be about where we are

versus where we thought we'd be, and where we should go from here. Just

last year, Congress called for 2006 to be a year of transition in Iraq

that would allow U.S. forces to begin to redeploy. But we're into the

middle of June, and we are actually adding troops.

A real debate would begin by recognizing that Iraq is a distinct

issue, only part of the ``global war on terror'' insofar as the

security vacuum in Iraq has attracted terrorists. But as the gentleman

from Missouri, Mr. Skelton, has said--Iraq is a separate conflict, an

insurgency with terrorist elements and sectarian violence.

A real debate would have been honest about how continuous deployment

in Iraq hurts our military personnel and their families, strains

recruiting and retention, and damages readiness.

A real debate would have looked at the human cost. We are losing one

battalion every month of killed or wounded soldiers. Just yesterday the

military reported that we've hit a tragic milestone. A total of 2500

American men and women have lost their lives in Iraq. More than 18,000

have been wounded. Attacks on U.S. forces are now at their highest rate

ever--900 a month.

A real debate would have looked at the financial cost. We are

mortgaging our future and the future of our children. So far Congress

has appropriated $320 billion for Iraq alone, a war that was supposed

to pay for itself through proceeds from the sale of Iraqi oil, and the

``bum rate'' is now up to $8 billion per month. That's $2 billion every

week, or $286 million every single day.

And if we were really concerned about the well-being of our troops,

we would be talking about the fact that every one of the Army's

available active duty combat brigades has served at least one 12-month

tour in Iraq or Afghanistan, 40 percent of the National Guard and

Reserves has been mobilized since September 11th, and nearly half of

those mobilized have been deployed two or more times. We need to

consider that the readiness of Army units here in the U.S. is at the

lowest level since the late 1970s.

We would also have considered what it means for current and future

readiness that fully 40 percent of the Army and Marine Corps ground

equipment is deployed to Iraq and that equipment in Iraq is wearing out

five times faster than the rate in peacetime. If the war in Iraq ended

today, the Army would require two years of supplemental appropriations

and at least $24 billion dollars to repair and replace equipment.

If we were properly concerned about our National Guard, we would have

addressed the

fact that it only has about 34 percent of its equipment on hand, down

from 75 percent of its requirement in 2001. The missing equipment has

been left in Iraq or transferred to units deploying to Iraq. The Army

National Guard has been directed to transfer more than 75,000 pieces of

equipment valued at $1.76 billion to the Army to support operations in

Iraq. There is no plan to replace these items.

No matter how each Member chooses to vote today, there's no question

that we all honor and support our troops. But I would argue that if we

really cared for our troops, we would make sure they had the equipment

and training they need. We wouldn't make it less possible for them to

meet some future mission. No one wants a new mission for our troops,

but if we had to fight somewhere else, we wouldn't have the equipment

or forces to do it.

These are the things that we should have been debating, not the

``feel good'' messages included in the Republican resolution. We all

want to feel good about Iraq and believe that progress is possible. But

we can't want progress so much that we blind ourselves to the reality

on the ground.

Of course, it's hard to know reality on the ground if Congress does

no oversight. Congress has a fundamental responsibility to review how

the money it appropriates is being spent and to ask tough questions.

The Republican majority would have us believe that asking questions

makes us unpatriotic.

But that's just wrong. We abrogate our responsibility to the American

people if we shut our eyes to how their tax dollars are being spent.

The Republican leadership seems unable to come up with anything other

than the same old tired lines. They will all toe the Administration

line when they vote today, but we all know that even Republicans are

having doubts as to the wisdom of the President's direction in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, we were led into war as a divided nation and today we

are even more divided. A successful withdrawal from Iraq can only

happen if Congress and the Bush Administration work to bring unity at

home.

This resolution doesn't bring us together, Mr. Speaker, and I regret

that the Republican leadership continues to seek to divide this House.

But that is the course they have chosen, and so they have left me no

choice but to reluctantly oppose this resolution today.