Madam President, this past week the President of the United

States warned of the ``disastrous consequences'' and ``chaos'' which

could occur in Iraq if we fail in that country. Once again the

President's statements demonstrate how out of touch he is on this

issue.

Iraq already is in a state of chaos. The American people know it and

the Iraqi people know it, most painfully. Unfortunately, we already are

dealing with the ``disastrous consequences'' of 4 years of this

administration's failed policy in Iraq.

This chaos became inevitable the day the President invaded Iraq

without a viable plan for winning the peace. And this chaos has been

further compounded by 4 years of consistent failure by this

administration.

The President's plan to surge forces into Iraq is no different from

previous surges, including Operation Together Forward, which only

resulted in more violence. Despite all of our military strength, the

United States cannot through force alone instill Iraqis with democratic

values or end the sectarian civil war in that country.

We have before us this afternoon a very direct, succinct nonbinding

resolution. The language is unequivocal in expressing opposition to the

President's surge. I am strongly opposed to the ``surge'' and will

therefore vote in a favor of this straightforward, simple resolution

expressing that opposition.

Surely our colleagues on the other side of the aisle can vote on a

simple resolution stating whether they support the President's surge.

This is a vote on whether you support the President's Iraq war

policy, without caveat or qualifier. And if this Chamber is ever

allowed to get to a vote on this measure, a majority of this body will

vote aye and therefore be publicly on record against the President's

proposed policy to put even more of our soldiers in harm's way in

Iraq's civil war.

If Congress had wanted to express its opinion on this important

issue, this vote should have been among the first steps taken back in

January, immediately after the President announced his intention to

escalate our military involvement in Iraq.

Nearly 5 weeks have passed since that announcement. In those 5 weeks

we have heard from experts across the political spectrum explain why

the surge won't work and explain that there is no military solution to

the conflict in Iraq.

Yesterday, the House of Representatives sent a message to the

President and to the American people with their vote on this resolution

opposing the surge. And yet the President has unwaveringly declared

that he will stay the course. It's full speed ahead in the words of

Vice-President Cheney.

We all know that and up-or-down vote on this resolution is not

enough. Yes, I oppose the President's proposed surge. But I oppose much

more than that--I oppose the President's overall strategy in Iraq.

So let's be realistic and understand that our pronouncing ourselves

on the measure before us today will do nothing to force the President

to change course in Iraq.

It will do nothing to get our troops out of harms way.

It will do nothing to improve the lives of Iraqi civilians.

American combat brigades are being asked to carry out a mission that

is unachievable; namely, to bring an end to Iraq's civil war through

military force.

Only a political solution can salvage Iraq.

Regrettably, we are in the fourth year of this conflict, and for some

reason, this administration is still failing our troops. The

President's proposed surge tactic will send thousands of American G.I.s

into a battle with inadequate protection and training and on a mission

which they will be unable to achieve.

Last month, Senator Kennedy and I sent a letter to Defense Secretary

Gates demanding that he address reported shortfalls among two combat

brigades being deployed as part of the President's proposed surge

without the most up-to-date armored vehicles, vehicles that have been

designed to withstand explosions and provide significantly better

protection for our troops.

Just this week, media accounts of a classified Defense Department

inspector general's report cited significant problems in outfitting our

forces with a variety of vehicle armor to protect troops from IEDS.

How much more of this can we allow to stand? How many more of these

reports should we tolerate until we say enough is enough?

The only way to reverse course in Iraq is to demonstrate to the

President that it's no longer business as usual--that this Congress

will not continue to support funding for the President's failed

strategy, which is needlessly harming our troops and weakening our

national security.

It is essential that we find a better use for the funds being

allocated for the President's surge. We need to redirect U.S. funds to

immediately begin to redeploy combat forces within and out of Iraq, to

focus on counterterrorism and training of Iraqis, to put pressure on

all of Iraq's leaders--not just the Maliki government--to seek and

reach necessary and painful political compromises, and to ensure the

security and political rights of all Iraqis.

We must also acknowledge how broken our own military is as a result

of the Iraq war and redirect a portion of the funds proposed for Iraq

to restore our own military's readiness.

It is time that this Congress moves beyond debating non-binding

resolutions about the surge. It is time for the Congress to debate how

much longer and under what circumstances we are prepared to support

funding for a continued U.S. presence in Iraq.

That is the debate the American people want to hear, that is the

debate our courageous and dedicated troops deserve.