Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the undemocratic,

completely closed rule, and in opposition to House Resolution 557.

Mr. Speaker, like all of my colleagues, I have tremendous respect for

the men and women of our Armed Forces who are bearing the burden of

this military action in Iraq. My support and my commitment to them and

their families are unwavering. I will work to ensure that they remain

the best trained, the best led, and the best equipped military force in

the world. I am grateful and humbled by their courage, endurance and

sacrifice, and I honor them not just today but every day, and I only

wish this House was considering today a truly bipartisan resolution

that properly honored our troops.

Unfortunately, once again this House is claiming to honor our troops

without devoting the necessary resources for their safety or for their

support. House Resolution 557 will do nothing to ensure that every one

of our military personnel, including our National Guard and reservists

serving on the front lines in Iraq will be fully equipped with the

latest body armor. Instead, many families of our troops are buying and

shipping that protection overseas to their loved ones, out of their own

pockets with no hope for reimbursement. This is unacceptable, and we

should fix it.

This resolution will do nothing to close the pay gap for our

reservists and National Guard members who have been called away from

their civilian jobs to serve in Iraq. Their families are struggling,

going into debt as a result of their patriotic service. Yet the

leadership of this House, unlike the other body, resists funding

commonsense solutions to the problems caused by these overlong

activations. This is unacceptable, and we should fix it.

This resolution contributes nothing towards fully funding our

military construction needs so that all our military personnel have

decent housing and facilities in which to live, train, and work. This

is unacceptable, and we should fix it.

Mr. Speaker, I support our troops. I want to help the suffering

people of Iraq live and prosper in a safe and secure nation. I want

them to have the opportunity to choose their own government, one where

every Iraqi may worship as he or she chooses, and every man, woman and

child can live out their lives. But 1 year and $120 billion later, we

face continuing hostilities in Iraq, with no end in sight.

This resolution fails to mention that the war in Iraq was justified

by this administration on the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

Why? Because just like the experts tried to tell us for months before

the war, we now know there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

I do not believe we needed to send over 150,000 American troops to

Iraq to confirm that fact. Mr. Speaker, 566 soldiers, sailors, airmen

and marines have died, and over 3,200 more have been wounded. Thousands

of Iraqi men, women and children have perished, and scores of other

civilians and nationals have been killed since we entered Iraq. There

is no mention, no remembrance for them in this resolution.

Today the American taxpayer is still paying for almost all of the

cost of Iraq without the least idea of how much the war has cost to

date or how much it will cost in the future. In fact, the operations in

Iraq are not even included in the President's budget. We still do not

have a truly independent commission to provide a full accounting of the

events leading up to the war and the nature of the intelligence of

policymaking that led the Bush administration to go to war.

Mr. Speaker, 1 year later the United States is more isolated than

ever in the world. Terrorist networks are proliferating, including new

networks in Iraq and Europe. And our troops abroad and our first

responders at home are overstretched, underfunded, and overburdened.

I am glad Saddam Hussein no longer has the power to torment the Iraqi

people, but unlike the claim made in this resolution, I do not believe

that the world is a safer, less dangerous place than it was 12 months

ago.

This resolution is more about what the Republican leadership wants us

to forget about the past year: the costs, the bloated contracts, no

weapons, no ties to al Qaeda, the flawed intelligence, the wounded and

the dead.

I urge all my colleagues to remember and vote against this

undemocratic rule and vote against this bill.