Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight as a Democratic member of the

House Armed Services Committee to try to place the upcoming debate we

will have tomorrow on the Iraqi war resolution into context.

It is very important that people realize that we do not get to vote

on general ideas here in Congress. We get to vote on specific pieces of

legislation. The case tomorrow will be H. Res. 861. I encourage not

only our colleagues here, but folks across America, to look this up on

the Internet and see what you think of it.

My guess is, and while there are many varied opinions on this

controversial war, my guess is that when you actually read the

resolution, you will find that there is remarkably little in it that is

controversial.

Now, you know that resolutions are primarily composed of whereas

clauses, which have really no effect, and then there are a few resolved

clauses. In this resolution, you will find that there are only seven

resolved clauses. Let me read them to you.

They say, resolved that the House of Representatives one, honors all

those Americans who have taken an active part in the global war on

terror, whether as first responders protecting the homeland, as service

Members overseas, as diplomats and intelligence officers or in other

roles.

That, to me, is uncontroversial. We must praise our troops.

Point two, we honor the sacrifices of the United States Armed Forces

and of the partners in the coalition and of the Iraqis and Afghans who

fought alongside them, especially those who have fallen or have been

wounded in the struggle, and we honor as well the sacrifice of their

families and of others who risked their lives to help defend freedom.

Who is against that?

Point three, we declare that it is not in the national security

interest of the United States to set an arbitrary date for the

withdrawal or redeployment of U.S. Armed Forces from Iraq.

Now, while that point can be controversial among some individuals, no

Member of this House wants to do anything to give our terrorist foes an

advantage. So it is very important that we realize that even this

point, number three, I think, if seen in the proper light, is pretty

uncontroversial.

Point four, we declare that the United States is committed to the

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

united Iraq. That to me means that Iraq will no longer be a haven of

terrorists. It will no longer be a play thing for a brutal dictator

like Saddam Hussein. So that to me is another point that should be

uncontroversial.

Point five, we congratulate Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the

Iraqi people on the courage they have shown by participating and

increasing millions in the elections of 2005 and on the formation of

the first government under Iraq's new constitution.

I think all Americans were impressed to see some 70 percent of the

eligible Iraqi population braving gunfire, braving bullets in order to

go vote. I wish we had that level of participation in our own country.

Point six, the resolution calls on the nations of the world to

promote global peace and security by standing with the United States

and other coalition partners to support the efforts of the Iraqi and

Afghan people to live in freedom.

Who is against that?

Finally, point seven, we declare that the United States will prevail

in the global war on terror, the noble struggle to protect freedom from

the terrorist adversary.

This is a resolution we will debate for some 10 hours tomorrow. I

think when you get down to it, there is really very little that is

controversial about it. But the context is somewhat controversial,

because under the rules of debate tomorrow we will not be allowed to

amend or change this document in any way. We will be required to accept

it as if it were perfect. Every American has suggestions for change.

There are many ways, countless ways that this document could be made

better, but we will not be allowed to consider any of those, because

under the procedures laid down by the Republican majority they do not

want to hear any alteration to this document.

That is one flaw in the debate we will have tomorrow. Another is that

this is really not a debate about how best to win the war on terrorism.

This is more of a public relations campaign 3 years into a very

controversial war designed to try to make the administration look

better.

I am not against any administration trying to improve its public

image. But for the safety of our troops, this debate is 3 or 4 years

late.

I had the privilege of serving in this House during the first Iraq

war, and that debate went down in history under the first President

Bush as one of the best debates in modern American history. But that

was under the first President Bush.

That first conflict, which followed the rules of the Powell Doctrine

of defending an explicit American interest of going in with

overwhelming force and having a clear exit strategy, sadly, in this

conflict, the Powell Doctrine was not followed, even though General

Powell was second as Secretary of State of the George W. Bush

administration during the onset of this war.

That is another clear difference from the Iraqi war of the past and

another clear flaw in this debate that this resolution will be debated

several years late. In a sense this is going to be a debate that is

unworthy of our troops, because some 2,500 Americans have already died,

almost 20,000 are casualties. Now, the House of Representatives is

getting around to having a debate on the war in Iraq, a debate that

allows no amendment, no change. We have to accept this as if it were

perfect.

There is another lesson that we should take into account, because you

know that those who do not remember history are doomed to repeat it. I

almost wish we could repeat the experience in the first Iraq war,

because under the first President Bush he was so persuasive with a

broad coalition of partners around the world that of the $60- to $80

billion cost of that war, the American taxpayer only had to pay for

about $2- to $4 billion, $2- to $4 billion, the total cost of the first

Iraq war to the American taxpayer. Why? Because our allies were so

eager to bear the burden of cost of the war, the first Iraq war.

Now, of course, we are involved in a conflict which has already cost

a minimum of $350 billion, but according to other estimates, more

likely $450 billion, and it looks as if it is headed towards $1

trillion, and almost all of that burden is put on the backs of the

American taxpayer.

Allied contributions verge on the negligible. You may remember that

Jim Baker, former Secretary of State, former Secretary of Treasury, was

sent around the world to collect contributions from allies.

Well, where is the money? Show me the money? Our allies have put up a

few billion dollars, but the American taxpayer has been required to

shoulder the burden of this war. Of course, running massive budget

deficits, as the George W. Bush administration has been doing,

effectively we have been borrowing much of the cost of the war from

foreign nations.

Increasingly Nations like China, increasingly Nations that are oil

rich like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, Nations like that are seeking

to reinvest petro dollars.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, does that make America stronger when we are

increasingly dependent on foreign lenders, many of which are not our

allies but may, in fact, be adversary? Does that make us a stronger,

better Nation?

Mr. Speaker, in the first Iraq War we were very careful not to damage

the American military. Our troops went in for a limited purpose, with

an overwhelming number, and exited in a very safe and prompt fashion.

That is not the policy today, even though President George W. Bush is

the son of the first President Bush.

So, all of these changes should worry us, especially those men and

women in uniform, because I am an advocate of letting the military be

the military. We have never had a finer fighting force than the one we

have today. It is an all-volunteer force. Our men and women in uniform

are terrifically capable. It is incredible the challenges that they

have met and overcome, oftentimes without the help of their superiors,

because especially their civilian superiors in this war consistently

underestimated the threat that our troops faced.

When our troops first went in, they were told that they might face a

few Baathists dead-enders, and of course, our civilian leaders

disbanded the Iraqi military, created all sorts of extra problems for

our troops. We could not even control looting in Baghdad, the major

city in Iraq.

So, soon, disorder prevailed, and pretty soon we were on the verge of

an insurgency that our civilian leadership in the Pentagon was claiming

it was really not much of a problem. Victory was always around the

corner. The President appeared on an aircraft carrier and declared that

the mission was accomplished.

Well, that was, at best, premature. Now we are hoping and praying the

Nation of Iraq is not on the verge of civil war, and let us not forget

Afghanistan, where we have a smaller troop commitment that is still a

vital one, and as the NATO forces try to take over from our men and

women in uniform, we should be very much concerned because the Taliban

seems to be on the rise.

General Barry McCaffrey just returned from Afghanistan and briefed us

last week and said that the Taliban fighters were better equipped than

the NATO forces, better equipped, in some cases, than the American

forces. Well, where is the Taliban getting all its money? Probably from

the drug trade because Afghanistan, as most observers are aware, has

once again become one of the leading drug exporting countries in the

world. Their poppy production has exploded. We have done very little,

if anything, about it, and that is financing not only the Taliban but

other forms of illicit terrorist behavior, not only in that country but

around the world.

So, Mr. Speaker, this debate comes to us in a tough context. It makes

it hard for men and women of goodwill to focus on the text of this

resolution, as praiseworthy as it is. It also makes it difficult for

some Members to acknowledge with a joyful heart the good news that we

have received recently in Iraq.

All Americans should be pleased that we have caught and killed

Zarqawi, one of the most notorious terrorists in the

history of the world, a man who reveled in beheadings of innocent

people, who killed fellow Muslims with abandon, all to promote his

warped ideology, his non-Islamic ideology.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of being in Baghdad the day that we

caught Saddam Hussein. That was a high point in the war in Iraq. That

was a moment at which our troops were filled with hope and anticipation

that the conflict would not last for many, many years. That the

Baathist dead-enders and other Saddam supporters would quickly turn

toward more peaceful pursuits.

But sadly, as we know now, we were not ready for what came

afterwards. We were not prepared for a franchising or spreading of the

terrorist threat. Some people view it as a nationalist threat. Perhaps

it is a tribal threat. There certainly are serious divisions between

the Kurds, Sunnis and the Shiias, but we should be prepared this time

for whatever follows the capture and death of Zarqawi because there are

many other enemies in that country who would love to exploit any

weakness that they see in the American forces.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on. I see that my colleague from the

Intelligence Committee has joined us here tonight, and I do not want to

rush him into this, but I welcome Mr. Ruppersberger's participation in

this debate. He is an outstanding Member of this body and of the

Intelligence Committee which is, of course, privy to our Nation's

deepest secrets.

So he bears that position with distinction and honor, and I welcome

Mr. Ruppersberger to comment at this point.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for his

great contribution to the debate, and his proposal is just one of the

many ideas that could and should be considered by the House of

Representatives.

This is a deliberative body. The debate tomorrow will allow us to

focus on only one proposal that was drafted in a secretive, partisan

fashion that does not allow ideas like Mr. Ruppersberger's to be

considered.

I think if you look at the debate, you will find that the folks who

are most short-changed in it are probably our own troops.

I mentioned earlier that the debate will not be worthy of them

because the debate is occurring some 3 years late, after 2,500 of them

have already been killed in service to our country and another 20,000

wounded, many of them grievously. We should have focused on this

earlier.

I was not in Congress when the decision was made to go into this

Iraqi conflict, although I was here for the vote on the earlier one,

and I think it is important that we hear the voice of our troops and of

our military commanders. In many ways, these are the voices that have

not been heard because, in many cases, they have been drowned out by

the civilian leadership in the Pentagon. That civilian leadership,

particularly the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld, and the former

Under Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, have systematically disregarded

military advice.

Not only did these two gentlemen consistently underestimate the

threat, oftentimes, as General Schwarzkopf, the great commander of the

first Iraqi war pointed out, they seem to be enjoying their jobs too

much. War is serious business, and I think it is time that we hear or

at least read the comments of several of our Nation's top generals

right now and see their reaction to Mr. Rumsfeld.

At the top of this poster you see Lieutenant General Greg Newbold say

that ``What we are living now is the consequence of successive policy

failures.'' Mr. Newbold was top Operations Officer of the Joint Staff,

Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, a recipient of the

Legion of Merit, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals.

Look at the comment from Major General Paul Eaton. ``Two-and-a-half

more years of that leadership was too long for my Nation and too long

for my army and for my family.'' General Eaton led the initial effort

to create an Iraqi army. He was Commander of the Coalition Military

Assistance Training Team, Commanding General of the Army Infantry

School.

Look at the comment from Lieutenant General John Riggs. ``They only

need the military advice when it satisfies their agenda. Well, that is

not paying proper respect to the professionalism and the valor of our

military. When you ignore military advice or use it for your own

political purposes, it is betraying the military.''

General Riggs was the Director, Objective Task Force, Commanding

General of the 1st U.S. Army, and served six tours overseas.

General Wesley Clark said, ``They pressed for open warfare before

diplomacy was finished. It was a tragic mistake. It was a strategic

blunder.''

Look at the comments from additional generals. Major General John

Batiste. ``Rumsfeld and his team turned what should have been a

deliberate victory in Iraq into a prolonged challenge.'' He was the

commander of the 1st Division in Iraq, the Chief Military Aid to Paul

Wolfowitz and a Brigade Commander in Bosnia.

Look at this comment from General Anthony Zinni. ``Rumsfeld has

committed acts of gross negligence and incompetence.'' General Zinni is

a former CENTCOM commander. That is the regional command there. One of

the most experienced men in the region, and a man whose advice was

systematically disregarded by this administration. General Zinni was

the recipient of the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star, and other

distinguished awards, including the Distinguished Service Medal.

I happened to visit General Swannack when I was on my first visit to

Iraq. He is the former Commander of the 82nd Airborne Division in Iraq.

We met in Ramadi, one of the tough towns in the Sunni Triangle. Listen

to what General Swannack has to say. ``I do not believe Secretary

Rumsfeld is the right person to fight that war based on his absolute

failures in managing the war against Saddam in Iraq.''

That is a vote of no confidence from one of Secretary Rumsfeld's top

commanders.

Look at this comment from Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper. ``If I

was the President, I would have relieved him from duty 3 years ago.''

General Van Riper is the first President of the Marine Corps

University, wounded in action in Vietnam, and a Silver Star recipient

and other awards.

You know, Secretary Rumsfeld makes no secret of the fact that he has

offered to resign twice and the President has not accepted his

resignation. Well, I am proud of Secretary Rumsfeld for having offered

to resign, because certainly great blunders have been made. But he has

been very reluctant to admit any of those publicly. Perhaps he admitted

them to the President.

It is important to realize that Secretary Rumsfeld knew early on in

this conflict that he was not really prepared for the job. In a famous

leaked October 2003 memo Secretary Rumsfeld himself said something

along these lines, that ``He did not have the metrics to understand

whether we were winning or losing the war against terrorism,'' but he

did know that we were losing the cost-benefit equation; that the

terrorists were effectively being able to use $80 IEDs to blow up $2

million tanks and take the lives not only of Americans but of

surrounding Iraqis.

So this is an amazing moment. Here we are 3 years later. I have asked

Secretary Rumsfeld periodically in hearings something along the lines

of every 2 or 3 months, ``Mr. Secretary, in October of 2003, after the

war had begun, you said you did not have the metrics to understand

whether we were winning or losing the war on terrorism. Do you have

those metrics today?'' Well, I haven't ever heard a good answer to that

question.

So I trust our military leaders. I trust our men and women in uniform

at all ranks, because so often today in this conflict the folks who

have the most combat experience are not the generals in the Pentagon,

they are the colonels, the majors, the captains, the lieutenants, the

sergeants, and the privates in the field.

And with the advent of advanced military communications, in some

cases the plain old Internet, there has been a lot of contact and

communication between those officers and enlisted men to find out the

best techniques, the best way to pacify a town, the best way to engage

in nation-building and get the infrastructure up and going again, the

best way to use commander emergency funds, to help employ Iraqis and

get the water turned on, get the electricity working, and things like

that. But it has been a surprisingly ad hoc effort.

We are the greatest nation on earth. We are the greatest nation in

the history of the world. And one of the primary reasons for that is

the brilliance and the dedication of our troops. We have a fighting

force like the world has never seen before. It is the most forceful

group of warriors, the most humane group of warriors, and the most

ethical group of warriors ever. And we should appreciate that. We

should be grateful for that, because we would not be able to take a

breath of freedom without their vigilance for our country.

Too many of us forget that our men and women in uniform are posted in

120 nations around the world every day and every night on lookout to

protect our freedom. I repeat, 120 nations around the world. Most

Americans, even with an atlas, could not even

name those nations. Not only are our soldiers making a terrific

sacrifice for us, their families are, their loved ones back home, and

we should never, never let a day go by without praying for them and

showing our deepest heartfelt appreciation for their sacrifice.

I wish our leaders in the Pentagon would listen to them more, because

our men and women in uniform on the front lines of freedom know more

about the terrorist adversary than the folks in the Pentagon and know

more about tactics and procedures for best dealing with the terrorists.

And if as my friend Mr. Ruppersberger said, his proposal for perimeter

defense makes sense to those military leaders, then I would hope our

civilian leaders in the Pentagon would listen as well.

We have had a lot of controversy because early on in the Iraq war

many of our top military leaders said we needed far more troops to go

in and work with the Iraqis in order to preserve security so that the

nation could be rebuilt. General Shinseki, Eric Shinseki, was probably

the leading proponent of that approach. In a Senate hearing he was

asked how many troops it would take, and he said a couple hundred

thousand. He was retired early for having told the truth, and no leader

in the Pentagon attended his retirement ceremony; a clear snub in

military culture.

You didn't see General Shinseki's name on this chart because he has

been too tight-lipped to really blast the folks who mistreated him in

such a grievous fashion, and mistreated him for what? For having told

the truth. For having admitted publicly that it would take a couple

hundred thousand troops to do the job right.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of Americans don't realize that not only do we

have troops posted in 120 nations around the world right now, but our

troops are under great stress. In military terms, they call it OPTEMPO.

Our troops have the highest OPTEMPO now than our troops have had since

World War II. That means greater stress than during Vietnam and greater

stress than during Korea. Our troops are stretched pretty thin right

now.

Most Americans don't realize that just a short while ago in Iraq,

when Tennessee's own 278th Guard unit was there in Iraq, in country,

that half or more of the active duty troops in the country were in fact

National Guardsmen, what some people view as weekend warriors. These

men and women from back home, who are not full-time active-duty

soldiers, were called up for tours of duty for 6 months, a year, or

more to serve their country in the sandy desert, tough climate, of

Iraq. They went willingly, without carping, to serve our Nation.

I am from the Volunteer State, Mr. Speaker. We earned that reputation

in many of our Nation's conflicts because when duty called, our men and

women back home didn't have to be asked twice to serve. They took their

rifle, their horse, whatever they had with them and volunteered for

duty. That spirit survives today.

It also survives in the independence of Specialist Wilson, who asked

Secretary Rumsfeld that famous question in Iraq about why National

Guardsmen had to go scrounging around in garbage dumps to find metal to

attach to the Humvees in order to try to protect themselves driving

down Iraqi highways. Secretary Rumsfeld, you will recall, was somewhat

startled by that question. But Specialist Wilson, a Tennessee

guardsman, got more reaction from Secretary Rumsfeld, got more response

in terms of really armoring our Humvees and other vehicles in Iraq than

the House Armed Services Committee was able to accomplish.

So I am proud of Specialist Wilson's courage, not only in serving his

country but in speaking truth to power. Secretary Rumsfeld clearly

didn't like to hear what he was saying, but it finally got our military

industrial complex working a little harder to up-armor our Humvees, to

provide the bullet-proofed vests, and other things that our troops

lacked for so, so many months and years in the Iraqi conflict. Why?

Because our civilian leadership persistently underestimated the threat.

So all I would ask, Mr. Speaker, is that the upcoming debate

tomorrow, the 10 hours, be conducted in a civil fashion, bearing in

mind the relatively innocuous text that has been put before us; bearing

in mind that the Republican leadership must feel insecure. Even though

they command an absolute majority in this House, even though they

command the Senate as well, and even though they control the White

House, they must feel so insecure that they would not allow any

amendment to this resolution.

The context, Mr. Speaker, is that we face a heavily divided country

on this issue. The House gave this war such a cursory debate when it

was undertaken that most Americans were unprepared, as in fact the

civilian leadership of the Pentagon was unprepared, for the length, the

duration, the toughness, and the cost of the conflict.

Now there were many people in our government who knew better.

Secretary Colin Powell was one, the four-star general who commanded our

troops in the first Iraq war, but he was plainly not listened to.

Many other experts in government, experts in nation-building, knew

this would be a tough and long struggle. But the Vice President, Mr.

Cheney, Secretary Rumsfeld and others insisted on, created several

illusions: One, that we would be greeted as liberators, toasted,

greeted with flowers, and that Iraqi oil revenues would somehow pay for

the conflict.

Well, that plainly did not happen. Now we are faced with a situation

where we are indeed proud of the bravery and valor of our troops, but

the administration is still unwilling to pay their bills. Until very

recently, there was no money in the regular budget to pay for the war

in Iraq. It was always an emergency supplemental. Everything was

unexpected. Now, finally, the administration seems to be getting a

little more realistic and they are at least willing to call it, as

Secretary Rumsfeld said, the long hard slog or the long, long war.

We can get through this. We have overcome all of our adversities in

the past. We are the greatest Nation on Earth and the greatest Nation

in the history of the world; but we owe that greatness in large measure

to our troops, the men and women in uniform, and not too much to our

civilian leadership in Washington. In many cases they have not acted in

a way to honor our troops.

One of the best ways to honor our troops is to listen to their good

advice. In so many cases our military leaders asked for more troops and

those troops were not supplied.

Read the book ``Cobra II'' by General Bernard Trainor. He is another

general whose name is not listed on this list but whose advice is very

crucial and whose history of the Iraq war is a very timely reminder of

what really happened, not only in the early months of the war but later

on. It is a truly shocking book that all Americans should read so we

never repeat these mistakes again. So that we go into future conflicts

better aware of the dangers and better prepared, and so the American

people are fully informed in advance so they are not shocked by things,

for example, that General Colin Powell knew all along.

Mr. Speaker, it is going to be an interesting debate tomorrow. Ten

hours on a largely innocuous resolution. This will probably be used as

part of the public relations initiative that we are seeing now. I found

the President's trip to Iraq very interesting. I think he stayed a full

5 hours. I hope he learned a lot, because it takes 15 hours to fly over

there and 15 hours to fly back, and to stay only 5 hours is not a great

learning opportunity.

I hope, too, we will have fuller bipartisan communication. When the

President first announced that he was going to speak to the new Iraqi

Cabinet by teleconference from Camp David, I thought, that's good.

Maybe he can speak to House and Senate leadership the same way, maybe

even in person, because there are so few opportunities for that

interaction, even though we work at different ends of the same street,

Pennsylvania Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, we will get through this conflict. We will bring our

troops home safely. Nobody knows exactly when yet, but we must

stabilize that tough region of the world. We must bring hope to so many

people who have been oppressed, especially Muslim women and religious

minorities and people who yearn for freedom. We can and will overcome.

We welcome the good news that we have received recently. We want more

good news. I think it will come, but there will be bad patches as well.

As we face the debate tomorrow, I think it is important for all

Americans to read the text first before they have a strong reaction to

it one way or the other, so they can read and see whether the whereas

and resolved clauses are offensive, or whether they find them as I do,

largely praise for two central objectives that I think all Americans

can agree with: praise for our troops and praise for the valor of the

Iraqi people.

We will prevail in this conflict, Mr. Speaker. It is not easy to mark

out today a path to victory, but I trust our men and women in uniform.

I trust our troops on the ground and our military experts, not our

civilian experts, to get us through this because we have the finest

fighting force in the history of the world and that will keep America

strong.