

I support our troops, wholeheartedly and without reservation. But I cannot support a resolution that simply opposes a new strategy without offering any alternative plan to win. There is too much at stake.

Let's just think about where we are as a country, about the global war we are in with people intent on killing Americans and how that affects our strategy in Iraq. When considering this, we must consider our nation's history and other difficult times of war.

There have been bleak moments in America's history, battles we were engaged in where American victory was far from certain.

In 1942, hell-bent on dominating the world with his ideology, Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich were systematically marching through Europe and taking the most basic freedoms from the Jewish people and killing millions. The U.S. entered World War II reluctantly. We were not ready for the hurdles we faced.

Don't forget, there were times when victory was far from certain and the outlook was grim. Many Americans and Europeans alive today can remember how bleak those times were as the war drug on. But we didn't give up. We persevered because we knew there was too much at stake.

80 years before World War II, in 1862, President Lincoln faced a war that most believed could not be won. He faced vocal and unrelenting criticism for his resolve to win the Civil War.

When the war began, Lincoln called for 74,000 volunteers for 90 days. History shows Lincoln grossly underestimated, as approximately 620,000 soldiers died during the Civil War.

At a time in our history when it might have been politically expedient to end the Civil War without first achieving victory, President Lincoln pressed on, constantly seeking a new strategy until he found one that worked because so much was at stake.

Perhaps some of the resolve Lincoln displayed came from lessons he learned 15 years earlier, when he endured a smaller battle.

In 1848, Abraham Lincoln was an often-criticized young freshman Member of this body, the House of Representatives, and was facing a difficult point in his career. Lincoln criticized the reasons President Polk gave for getting us into the Mexican-American War. A war that began before Lincoln came to office - a position I can identify with as I stand here today.

Then-Congressman Lincoln voted for a resolution that stated the Mexican-American War was “unnecessarily and unconstitutionally” initiated by President Polk. Lincoln thought the war was nothing more than a political move to grab land from the Mexican people. My

friends, it is legitimate and in fact our duty to question the reasons why our country goes to war and Abraham Lincoln showed us that.

However, he also showed us something else. Abraham Lincoln made an incredibly important distinction that we can learn from today.

A Lincoln biographer, Doris Kearns Goodwin, writes that after being criticized for that vote, “Lincoln sought to clarify his position, arguing that although he had challenged the instigation of the war, he had never voted against supplies for the soldiers.” Lincoln knew the damage of condemning a war effort while claiming to support our troops. Yet that is what the resolution before us today does.

During the American Revolution, the men and women who would become this country’s first citizens were declared by the King of England to be in rebellion. The King sent soldiers across the Atlantic to quell the uprising.

In every war, it is the average citizen who stands up and fights for his neighbor’s freedom. It is the same today. In response to the King of England’s attack, again it was the average citizen who stood up and fought. A bookstore owner, the manager of an iron foundry and a land surveyor all stood and fought for their neighbors’ freedom. Those men were Henry Knox, Nathaniel Green and George Washington.

During America’s War for Independence, it was not clear if we would prevail. We lost battle after battle. Troops deserted the battle fields.

General Washington and his deputies persevered, continuing to engage the enemy until the tide turned – because so much was at stake.

We are the United States of America today, and we are free, because General Washington refused to quit until we achieved victory.

We are the United States of America today, and we are free, because Abraham Lincoln refused to quit until we achieved victory.

We are the United States of America today, and we are free, because Roosevelt and Truman refused to quit until we achieved victory.

And we are the United States of America today, and we are free, because of the sacrifice of the men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line in Iraq, Afghanistan, and all over the world preserving our freedom.

Today, the United States is engaged in another war. Just as before, we face an enemy that wants to destroy our way of life. Just as before, we face an enemy that thinks it is winning. Just as before, our country is divided. Just as before, we are making mistakes. Just as before, we face a moment of truth about what to do next. And just as before, the consequences of losing are devastating.

The enemy is clear about what their intentions are. By what they say and what they do, al Qaeda and the global movement it has spawned

have made it clear that they want nuclear and biological weapons. It is clear they want to kill millions of Americans. Osama bin Laden has called acquiring nuclear weapons a “religious duty.”

The fact is, we are engaged in a global war with people intent on killing Americans and regardless of how we got into Iraq, Iraq is now a central front of that war.

And yet while we debate this nonbinding resolution, what is really at stake is winning or losing. Like Lincoln, I was not in office when this war began. I understand the arguments and the questions. I’ve been asking questions too, as an elected official for two years and as a concerned citizen and veteran before that. I understand that there are many who think we should never have entered Iraq; we now know there was faulty intelligence that led to that decision.

But the war is upon us nonetheless. I am elected to deal with what is happening now. Will we succeed? Will we win? Just as in other moments in our history, those questions stand unanswered.

The consequences of declaring an end to the war in Iraq without victory would be felt for decades. Our enemies around the world would be emboldened. Iran and Al Qaeda would declare victory. Our allies in Iraq would certainly face bloodshed, and our allies around the world would question our resolve to protect them.

Sergeant Eddie Jeffers is a US Army Infantryman serving in Ramadi, Iraq. Sgt. Jeffers has a first-hand appreciation for what's at stake in Iraq, and what our presence there means to the Iraqi people. He writes, *quote*:

“We are the hope of the Iraqi people. They want what everyone else wants in life: safety, security, somewhere to call home. They want a country that is safe to raise their children in.... They want to live on, rebuild and prosper. And America has given them the opportunity, but only if we stay true to the cause and see it to its end. But the country must unite in this endeavor...we cannot place the burden on our military alone. We must all stand up and fight, whether in uniform or not...

Right now, the burden is all on the American soldiers. Right now, hope rides alone. But it can change, it must change. Because there is only failure and darkness ahead for us as a country, as a people, if it doesn't.” *end quote*

Sgt. Jeffers words hit at the heart of our present challenge in Iraq; our current strategy in Iraq is failing, and yet failure is not an option. In November, the American people told us they wanted a new strategy not because they want us to leave and lose but because they want us to win. Now we have a new strategy before us.

Is this new plan going to work? I don't know. No one in this body voting today knows. What I do know is that we must find a way to

achieve victory and simply saying no to a new plan without offering an alternative won't work and sends a terrible message to our enemies and our soldiers.

This is an historic war. America is engaged in a war for our freedoms on a scale that we've never experienced before. I understand the dissension, the questions and the uncertainty. I understand that the cost is high and the way is often unclear. I served as a law enforcement officer and lost partners and colleagues who were close to me. I understand the cost of freedom and the sacrifices that must be made. The sacrifices are hard. But we must remain focused and not let those sacrifices be in vain.

Mister/Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote no on this resolution; Lincoln warned us against tying a criticism of the war to support of the troops. Let's send a message to our enemies and our troops alike: We will always support our young men and women who put their lives on the line for freedom.

[I yield back the balance of my time.]