As you chart the course of this great nation for the future benefit of our children, grand-children, and great-grandchildren, I ask you to think more boldly and humanely about the Third World and develop a new version of the Marshall plan, this time not to rescue a war-torn Europe, but now to help the nearly one billion, mostly rural poor people still trapped in hunger and misery. It is within America's technical and financial power to help end this human tragedy and injustice, if we set our hearts and minds to the task.

Mr. HARKIN. I yield the floor.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, earlier today in the Capitol Rotunda we honored Dr. Norman Borlaug with the Congressional Gold Medal. This is the highest expression of national appreciation.

At least two-thirds of Federal lawmakers must sign on to support a nominee before his or her nomination is allowed to advance through Committees in the House and Senate. Previous recipients include distinguished public servants, military heroes, humanitarians, entertainers, musicians, authors, athletes, religious leaders and pioneers in the fields of medicine, science, and aeronautics including our Nation's first President, George Washington.

Many of you know that I farm in Iowa with my son Robin.

Those of us farming take satisfaction in feeding people through our labors.

Through his labors, Dr. Borlaug has been able to feed many more people that Robin and I will ever be able to, even if we worked day and night.

He has spared more people from the sharp hunger pains that strike an empty stomach than anyone of us could ever dream of doing.

He has saved more lives than any other person in history.

An extraordinary man, with a brilliant vision, and the common sense to turn his dreams into a reality—that's Norm Borlaug.

I am grateful, but not surprised, that it didn't take long for Congress to advance the legislation giving Dr. Borlaug this award.

A few years ago, I spoke with Dr. Borlaug just outside the Senate Chamber.

It was overwhelming just how many Senators came off the Senate floor to shake hands with him.

I was glad to be able to claim Dr. Borlaug as a native Iowan who has become a true citizen of the world—from a boyhood on a farm in northeast Iowa—a one-room schoolhouse—to a PhD in plant pathology, to decades in the poorest areas of rural Mexico, and a life of scientific breakthroughs to ease malnutrition and famine all over the world. His work in biotechnology has vastly improved food security for countries including India, Pakistan, and Mexico. This humanitarian hero has been instrumental in seeking social justice and promoting peace around the world.

Far from resting on his laurels, Dr. Borlaug continues to inspire future generations of scientists and farmers to innovate and lift those mired in poverty.

As a fellow Iowan said, ''If you never stick your neck out, you'll never get your head above the crowd.''

Dr. Borlaug stuck his neck out and became a hero and a legend.

He deserves every bit of recognition and gratitude we can find to offer him.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me today in honoring Dr. Norman Borlaug of Dallas, TX.

Today, Dr. Borlaug receives the Congressional Gold Medal—the Nation's highest civilian decoration.

Dr. Borlaug's service to the world's hungry was cultivated on his boyhood farm in Iowa where he learned the value of hard work. He sharpened his knowledge of agriculture and science at the University of Minnesota and later applied his farm and classroom experiences to researching and developing high-yield wheat varieties in Mexico that thrived in arid conditions. Under his leadership, these innovative crops were introduced into India, Pakistan, and later Africa, having since fed the hungry in astonishing numbers.

Never allowing himself to become satisfied with the status quo, Dr. Borlaug continued his humanitarian efforts, paving the way for other scientists to fight hunger and to feed the world's increasing population. Dr. Borlaug created the annual World Food Prize to recognize and reward those who advance human development by improving the quality, quantity, and availability of food in the world.

Each fall semester, Dr. Borlaug returns to Texas A&M University to teach those who would follow in his footsteps and continue to innovate. In his role as distinguished professor of international agriculture in the Department of Soil & Crop Sciences, aspiring Aggie students have the opportunity to witness hard-working benevolence and learn from one of mankind's greatest and most humble benefactors.

There are many lessons we can learn from Dr. Borlaug's service. This man saw a need and applied his education to the realities of poverty and hunger. He chose to put his hands in the soil and work to make a vision become reality.

Dr. Borlaug reminds us that a single individual with the knowledge and courage to make a difference can indeed change the world.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the most recent addition to a long list of accolades that Dr. Borlaug has earned throughout his lifetime, including the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize for his innovative work in agriculture. It has been suggested that Dr. Borlaug's humanitarian efforts have saved the lives of perhaps one billion of the world's hungry, and through his ongoing legacy of leadership his work will feed many more.

We join in gratitude for his consistent dedication in applying the agricultural sciences to benefit so many. I am honored to have been able to cosponsor this award for Dr. Borlaug.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in recess under the previous order.

Thereupon, at 1:15 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CASEY).

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 2100

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 30 minutes of debate equally divided on amendment No. 2100 offered by the Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN.

The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I yield myself 10 minutes.

I rise to discuss my amendment which lays out the consequences of a failed state in Iraq. As every parent of a teenager knows, one of the things you have to impress upon your teenager is the consequences of their actions. I think we need to have an adult conversation and talk about the consequences of our actions in Iraq.

The one thing we all agree on is that we want to bring our troops home. We want to bring them home as soon as we can. The line of division between us seems to be between those who want to do so based upon an arbitrary political timetable and those who want to do so based on conditions on the ground. So I think it is important to have—as any adult would say to their child—a conversation about the consequences of your actions because I think these are the birds that are going to come home to roost should the Levin amendment be adopted.

As we know from the Iraq Study Group as well as the National Intelligence Estimate, the consequences of a failed state in Iraq are numerous, but they are significant and highly dangerous to the United States.

First of all, Iraq would become a safe haven for Islamic radicals, including al-Qaida and Hezbollah, who are determined to attack the United States and U.S. allies. The Iraq Study Group found that a chaotic Iraq would provide a still stronger base of operation for terrorists who seek to act regionally or even globally. That is not me talking; that is the Iraq Study Group. The Iraq Study Group also noted that al-Qaida will portray any failure by the United States in Iraq as a significant victory that will be featured prominently as they recruit for their cause in the region and around the world.

The National Intelligence Estimate presented by the intelligence community, which consists of the best and the brightest America has to offer, concluded that the consequences of a premature withdrawal from Iraq would be

that al-Qaida would attempt to use Anbar Province for further attacks outside of Iraq, neighboring countries would consider actively intervening in Iraq, and sectarian violence would significantly increase in Iraq, accompanied by massive civilian casualties and displacement. The Iraq Study Group found that a premature American withdrawal from Iraq would almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence and further deterioration of conditions. The near-term results would be a significant power vacuum, greater human suffering, regional destabilization, and a threat to the global economy. Al-Qaida would depict our withdrawal as a historic victory, much as they did when the Soviet Union was run out of Afghanistan.

A failed state in Iraq could lead to a broader regional conflict involving Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. The Iraq Study Group noted that Turkey could send troops into northern Iraq to prevent Kurdistan from declaring independence. The Iraq Study Group noted that Iran could send troops to restore stability to southern Iraq and perhaps gain control of oilfields. The regional influence of Iran could arise at a time when that country is on a path to producing a nuclear weapon, as we know they are all about.

A failed state in Iraq would lead to massive humanitarian suffering. I know we are all concerned about what we see as the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan, but those of us who are concerned about that huge humanitarian crisis there must also be concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Iraq should we prematurely withdrawal our troops and that country descend into massive ethnic cleansing and genocide and massive dislocation of refugees to other areas of the Middle East.

A recent editorial in the New York Times said Americans must be clear that Iraq and the region around it could be even bloodier and more chaotic after Americans leave. There could be reprisals against those who work with American forces, further ethnic cleansing, and even genocide. Potentially destabilizing refugee flows could hit Jordan, Syria, and Iran and Turkey could be tempted to make a power grab. The Iraq Study Group found that if we leave and Iraq descends into chaos, the long-range consequences could eventually require the United States to return.

My amendment commits the Senate to take no action that would lead to a failed state in Iraq that would invariably, in the opinion of the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan group of experts, as well as the National Intelligence Estimate, lead to consequences that would not only be devastating for the Iraqis, it would be destabilizing in that region and would lead to greater loss of life and greater insecurity in the United States.

So I hope all of my colleagues will vote in favor of this amendment at 2:45 when that vote is scheduled. I can't imagine any possible objection to this sense of the Senate on the consequences of a failed state in Iraq.

Finally, I would say this is an important part of the overall debate where we talk about not only what our preferred policy is but what the consequences of a failure would be. I think part of a responsible adult debate is talking about what the consequences would be as we commit ourselves to take no action that would lend an increased likelihood to that failed state.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair notify me when I have spoken for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas for explaining his amendment. But when I hear him describe the Levin-Reed amendment, I am afraid I don't recognize it because, unfortunately, the Senator from Texas has failed to include some of the most important elements of this Levin-Reed amendment.

This is the only amendment the Senate will consider during debate on this bill which will change the policy of the war in Iraq. It is the only amendment which establishes a timetable to bring this war to a responsible end. It is the only amendment which in law will require American troops to start to come home, the Levin-Reed amendment.

The amendment offered by the Senator from Texas is a sense-of-the-Senate resolution. A sense-of-the-Senate resolution is done on a regular basis on the floor of the Senate. It does not have the power and impact of law. It is an observation made by the Senate. That is all. It is not binding on the President. It won't change the policy. There is no suggestion that it even could.

What the Senator from Texas brings to us is the possibility that things could get worse in Iraq than they are today, and that is a possibility. But let's be very honest about the state of Iraq today. It is a nation in chaos. It is a nation that is engulfed by its own civil war. It is struggling to decide which faction within its nation will govern. Frankkly, some question whether it will be a nation. I think the Kurds, for example, given their way, would be independent of Iraq as we know it today. This struggle to define Iraq is part of the chaos and consternation we find in that country.

Finally, of course, this civil war is driven by so many elements—criminal elements, al-Qaida elements, Ba'athist elements, Iranian elements, and, yes, a civil war generated by a division within Islam that has gone on for more than 14 centuries. It is into this crucible of hate and killing that we have sent 170,000 American troops who each morning get up, strap on their armor, and go out and pray to God they will live for another day. Is that what we bargained for when President Bush said we had to rid ourselves of Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction?

The Senator from Texas makes the argument that if we leave, things could get worse. It is possible. But I will tell you this: Stabilization will occur on Iraqi terms whenever the American military departs, and it is likely to be chaotic. We have to acknowledge that. Whether we leave in 10 months or 10 years, the Iraqis have to decide their own future.

The elements of the Levin-Reed amendment which the Senator from Texas does not acknowledge are absolutely essential. He will find, when he reads the Levin-Reed amendment, on page 3, paragraph 3, we will still have troops engaged in targeted counterterrorism operations against al-Qaida and al-Qaida-affiliated organizations and other international terrorist organizations.

The Senator from Texas suggests that we will leave and walk away from the scene and hope for the best. That is not true. Under Levin-Reed, we will continue to fight al-Qaida, the fight which we should have been dedicated to from 9/11 forward and a fight which by this time should have brought us Osama bin Laden and his major lieutenants.

Secondly, the argument made by the Senator from Texas is that the Levin-Reed amendment is going to lead to a broader regional conflict as American troops start to come home. I recommend for reading by the Senator from Texas page 2 of the amendment, which goes into graphic detail about our hope that as we start to withdraw, as our troops start to withdraw from Iraq, we will initiate a comprehensive, diplomatic, political, and economic strategy that includes sustained engagement with Iraq's neighbors and the international community for working out collective stability in that country.

I would say to my friend from Texas, what he has suggested as part and parcel of the result of Levin-Reed is already taken care of. We want to start bringing American troops home. Losing 100 American soldiers every month, 1,000 seriously wounded, $12 billion in taxpayers' money, put into a situation which is nothing short of a civil war, is unacceptable.

The future of Iraq is in the hands of the Iraqis. They have to stand up and defend their own country. They have to decide their own future. Is it likely to be smooth sailing as we leave? No. But it is a process which will take place whether we leave within a few months or a year or wait much longer.

I encourage my colleagues to look honestly at this Cornyn amendment. As I reflect on it, I don't think it offers any serious challenge. None of us want to see a failed Iraq. But let's remember that the bottom line is the only

amendment which will change the policy in Iraq is the amendment by Senators LEVIN and REED which we will vote on, after an all-night session, first thing tomorrow morning.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, may I inquire how much time I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Nine minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the distinguished majority whip, the Senator from Illinois, but I do see things a little differently.

First of all, when he talks about a civil war in Iraq, he seems to overlook the fact that al-Qaida is present in Iraq and is the precipitating cause for the sectarian strife we are all concerned about. What would he do to deal with al-Qaida in Iraq, which they regard as the central front in their war against the West?

When my friend from Illinois says we need a limited presence of our American troops in Iraq, I am not sure what that means, but I sure would rather have the four star Army GEN David Petraeus determining the appropriate tactics to deal with the threat on the ground rather than politicians, armchair generals here in Washington, DC.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. CORNYN. I will yield for a question.

Mr. DURBIN. I will make this very brief. Isn't it a fact that over the weekend, the Prime Minister of Iraq invited us to leave at any time?

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, to my knowledge, we are of one mind that we do want to leave Iraq. The question is, Under what conditions? I don't believe Prime Minister Maliki certainly is on record as saying he wants us to leave at a time when his government would be rent asunder and Iraq would descend into sectarian war and perhaps a regional conflict. But the fact is, GEN David Petraeus, the general whom we confirmed unanimously just a short time ago, has recommended to the Commander in Chief a new strategy known as the surge, which was completed just last month, a few short weeks ago. Now he has said to give that surge an opportunity to do its job and he will come back and report to us in September. I think we ought to give that a reasonable chance.

While the distinguished majority whip wants to talk about the Levin amendment, I think we will have plenty of time to talk about that during the course of the evening.

The irony is, we are ready to vote on the Levin amendment at almost any time. But we are going to have a big political theater tonight. We will have a lot of fun having a Senate slumber party for the benefit of organizations such as moveon.org, which is having a press conference at 8:30 tonight. We ought to be having a serious debate and voting on these amendments, which we are happy to do at virtually anytime.

I worry when I hear my friend say stabilization will take place on Iraqi terms, as if the only consequences of a failure in Iraq would be borne by the Iraqis. The fact is, according to the National Intelligence Estimate, the intelligence community, the Iraq Study Group, and others, it will make America less safe by creating a safe haven for organizations such as al-Qaida to plot, plan, train, and to export future terrorist attacks against the United States.

If we think they are modest in their goals, I think we need to think again. Rather than a crude instrument like an airplane flying into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, this terrorist organization in Iraq, which considers Iraq the central front in their war against the West, is trying to get biological, chemical, and even nuclear weapons. Woe be the day that they get their hands on those and use them against America or its allies.

So I think we should be of one mind with this sense of the Senate that says we would take no action that would make it more likely that Iraq would descend into a failed state to create that haven for terrorists.

I yield the floor and reserve my time.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan has 9½ minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. President, I think everybody in this body would like to leave Iraq better than we found it. That is not the current situation. The current situation is chaos and violence in Iraq. It is an Iraq that is torn apart by sectarian violence. When you have group slaughtering group in a civil war, a sectarian type of war, it requires that the Iraqi political leaders take action to end the violence. The only way to end the violence is if the Iraqi political leaders will reach a political settlement. I think almost everybody agrees with that. I think our uniformed military agrees with that, our civilian leaders agree, and almost everybody agrees that there is no military solution in Iraq, and that the only solution, the only way to end this violence is if the Iraqi political leaders accept the responsibility to work out political agreements on a number of disagreements they have identified for themselves.

We talk a lot about benchmarks, and the President said the other day that on eight benchmarks we are making progress, and on eight we are not—to make it sound like we have a glass that is half full. But that is not what the facts sustain or support. The facts are that we have a glass called Iraq which has a hole in the bottom. Whatever we pour into Iraq goes right through that hole. It is going to continue to do that until one thing happens, and that is that the Iraqi political leaders decide they are going to work out a political settlement. There is a consensus about that, I believe, among almost all of us.

The Iraqi Prime Minister made the following statement, and every one of us, when we vote on Levin-Reed, ought to keep this one statement in mind, I believe, first and foremost. This is what Prime Minister Maliki said:

> The crisis is political, and the ones who can stop the cycle of bloodletting of innocents are the politicians.

Well, it is long overdue that the politicians in Iraq step up to their responsibility. The amendment before us, it seems to me, states something which is clear. I believe it is obvious that it is in everyone's interest that Iraq not be a failed state. I agree with my friend from Texas. That should be a goal of everybody. The problem is that Iraq is the No. 2 most unstable state in the world right now. That is the status quo. That is what we have to end. The only way to end it is with a political settlement by the Iraqis.

There was an article a few days ago in Foreign Policy magazine called ''The States That Fail Us.'' It is about failed states. It has a list of about 60 states, and they give all of the indicators of instability. Iraq is No. 2 on the list, right after Sudan. That is the status quo. That is what we are trying to end—the failure of a policy in Iraq which has led the Iraqi leaders to believe that there is an open-ended commitment on the part of the United States to give them protection in that green zone to the extent that it exists. It is that open-ended commitment of the United States that must end—if we are going to prod the Iraqi leaders to finally step up, look into the abyss and make a decision, do they want a civil war or do they want a nation?

Mr. President, we cannot save them from themselves. To say that we don't want a failed state in Iraq is to say we don't want the status quo to continue, that the course must change in Iraq.

So I will vote for the Cornyn amendment because I think it states, in general terms at least, what I hope Members of the Senate would all agree on—that a failed state in Iraq is not in the interest of this Nation.

Mr. DURBIN. How much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan controls 4 minutes. The Senator from Texas controls 5 minutes. Who yields time?

The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am grateful for the statement of the distinguished chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Senator from Michigan, in support of this amendment. I believe it is noncontroversial. If there is one thing we ought to be able to agree upon in this debate, it is that it is not in our self-interest to leave Iraq as a failed state.

Where we diverge is where the Senator says we have to put more pressure on the politicians. I think we need to

do that, but not so much pressure that they simply collapse, which is my concern. That is why I believe what General Petraeus has said, which is that the situation in Iraq is hard but not hopeless. That gives me some hope that we can provide them the space they need in order to make those hard political decisions, which are extraordinarily difficult. If you think about it, the kind of decisions they are being called upon to make—for example, the sharing of oil revenue—I might suggest that is equivalent to the U.S. Congress trying to solve the Social Security insolvency problem. It is not easy for to us do. We have not done it yet. How in the world can we expect this new democracy, particularly under such stressful and difficult circumstances, to do things that we ourselves would find extraordinarily difficult to do? Talking about debaathification and things like that—the Baathist Party, under Saddam Hussein, was guilty of the most heinous sorts of crimes against the Shiite majority. This is a country traumatized from years of a police state under the boot heel of a terrible, blood-thirsty dictator like Saddam Hussein, where hundreds of thousands of people were killed by Saddam Hussein.

So it is not surprising that this traumatized nation is having challenges coming back from that and that they are slow to make decisions that we think they should be making. But the basic minimum is that they need the security in order to have the space in order to make those difficult decisions. That is what this new plan is, which is only in the early stages of being implemented by General Petraeus, designed to do.

What are the early reports? We are beginning to see some progress, particularly in Anbar Province in dealing with al-Qaida that up until recently basically had the run of the place. The tribal sheiks and others are coming forward and volunteering for the police and security forces. So I guess we are seeing the most hard-bitten cynics, but there are some signs that things are getting a little bit better in terms of the security context. It seems obvious that basic security has to prevail in order for the Iraqis, in exercising their new democratic government, to try to reconcile some of these terrible and difficult decisions.

I am delighted that the distinguished chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee has said he will support this amendment. My hope is that this is one thing in the course of all of this fractious debate that we can unify behind.

I reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to address two comments made earlier by the Senator from Texas. He referred to the possibility of an all-night session in the Senate as a so-called Senate slumber party. Trust me, that is not what this is about. What we are facing on the Republican side of the aisle is an objection to an up-or-down vote, a majority vote, on the Levin-Reed amendment. That amendment is the only amendment which establishes a time line and a timetable for ending this war responsibly and beginning to bring our troops home within 120 days. It is the only amendment before us that will achieve that. Other amendments are interesting. None of them have the power of law.

The Levin-Reed amendment has the power of law. The President will have to follow it or veto it. Those are his choices. That is why it is so serious. That is why the Republican leadership has opposed our having a majority vote on this in the Senate. They are filibustering it, trying to stop us from getting to a vote on that amendment.

Ordinarily, when you filibuster something, it is so sanitized and civilized, you don't even know it is happening. Members of the Senate file a cloture motion and go out for dinner and say: We'll see you in the morning for the vote. Tonight they will stick around. If they want to filibuster this amendment that will change the policy in Iraq, they will have to stay and debate it. It will be a real filibuster. If they believe this is still right, we will see if they feel that way at 4 a.m. tomorrow morning. That is what this is about. It is not a slumber party.

The Senator from Texas said, ''We are ready to vote.'' Therefore, I ask unanimous consent to vote on the Levin-Reed amendment No. 2087 at 6 p.m., with the time between 3:05 and then equally divided in the usual form.

Mr. MCCAIN. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, if this were the first time that a 60-vote requirement were made, I would have some sympathy for the Senator from Illinois. I am having staff compile the number of times when the other side of the aisle was in the minority, they demanded 60 votes as well. You cannot do it with a straight face.

You cannot say that all we are going to do here in the Senate is have us govern by 51 votes; otherwise, we may as well be unicameral because we would have the Senate and the House exactly the same.

So, of course, I will object, Mr. President. I wish we would get off this horse of saying that somehow the other side never employed the 60-vote requirement in the Senate, because they did. It is a tradition in the Senate, and it is within the rules of the Senate. It may be frustrating. It certainly was to us when we were in the majority and the Democrats were in the minority and they employed it. But to somehow act as if what is being done is unprecedented—I will tell you what is unprecedented; it is taking a Defense authorization bill that is there for the training and equipping and pay raises and necessities of life for the men and women serving in the military, when we should be passing this—we all know it is going to come up in September. We should be passing this so the men and women can get what they need and deserve in order to defend the security of this Nation. Instead, Mr. President, what we are doing is having, again, for the eighth or ninth time, without having passed one appropriations bill, including the Military Construction appropriations bill, which is ready to be passed—instead, we will have this ''argument'' against the filibuster.

Mr. President, it doesn't pass the smell test. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The time in opposition has expired.

The Senator from Texas has 1 minute.

Mr. CORNYN. I have 1 minute remaining?

Mr. President, I agree with the Senator from Arizona, of course. My belief would be that if our friends on the other side of the aisle wanted to move up the cloture vote on the Levin amendment to 6 p.m. tonight, we could expedite things and get right to the vote that perhaps the distinguished majority whip wishes to have. I think there is no objection on this side to providing a vote on that cloture vote. We could do that sooner rather than later. I certainly would support that action. I will have to consult with the leaders on this side of the aisle, but that certainly might help us get to the bottom of things that much sooner.

I urge all my colleagues to vote in support of the amendment before us that would be a vote against any action that would enhance the likelihood of a failed state in Iraq, which is not in America's best security interests.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I have a unanimous consent request. I need Senator MCCAIN to listen. Apparently, the time the Senator from Arizona took on his reservation came out of our time, and I am wondering if he would give us a minute.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to give that to the distinguished chairman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on the question of the 60 votes, there is a procedural roadblock which is being placed here. It is not the first time in history, of course, but a decision has to be made here whether the verdict of the American people last November that there be a change in policy is going to be thwarted by that procedural roadblock, and the Republican leader has apparently decided it will be.

In terms of precedent, last year on the Defense authorization bill, there

were at least two votes on Iraq, both majority votes. That is the precedent. Last year, there was a Levin-Reed amendment that received 39 votes and a Kerry amendment, both on Iraq on the Defense authorization bill, the most recent experience. This issue is so vital. It is so much in the minds of the American people that we should not throw up procedural roadblocks to allowing the Senate to vote. That is why we have asked that we be allowed to vote up or down on this amendment, and that apparently has now been objected to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2100. The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 248 Leg.]

YEAS—94

Akaka	Domenici	Mikulski
Alexander	Dorgan	Murkowski
Allard	Durbin	Murray
Barrasso	Ensign	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Enzi	Nelson (NE)
Bayh	Feinstein	Obama
Bennett	Graham	Pryor
Bingaman	Grassley	Reed
Bond	Gregg	Reid
Boxer	Hagel	Roberts
Brown	Hatch	Rockefeller
Brownback	Hutchison	Salazar
Bunning	Inhofe	Sanders
Burr	Isakson	Schumer
Cantwell	Kennedy	Sessions
Cardin	Kerry	Shelby
Carper	Klobuchar	Smith
Casey	Kohl	Snowe
Chambliss	Kyl	Specter
Clinton	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coburn	Lautenberg	Stevens
Cochran	Leahy	Sununu
Coleman	Levin	Tester
Collins	Lieberman	Thune
Conrad	Lincoln	Vitter
Corker	Lott	Voinovich
Cornyn	Lugar	Warner
Craig	Martinez	Webb
Crapo	McCain	Whitehouse
DeMint	McCaskill	Wyden
Dodd	McConnell	
Dole	Menendez	

NAYS—3

Byrd	Feingold	Harkin

NOT VOTING—3

Biden	Inouye	Johnson

The amendment (No. 2100) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, late this morning, I sent a letter to the distinguished minority leader, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL. I addressed the letter ''Dear Mitch,'' and I will read the letter.

There are no more solemn decisions facing Members of Congress than the conduct of the war and the placing of our troops in harm's way. As you know, more than 3,600 brave Americans have lost their lives and more than $400 billion has been expended on the war in Iraq, which has now moved into its fifth year, with no end in sight. Yet Senate Republicans have chosen to prevent an honest debate, an action on legislation to provide an Iraq strategy that will allow us to responsibly redeploy our troops and refocus our attention on the very real threat posed by al-Qaida. This is partisan obstruction that I fear will make us less, not more, secure, and I urge you to reconsider your course.

Today's headlines confirm the importance of allowing the Senate to consider amendments to change the course in Iraq and refocus our resources so we can more effectively wage the war on terror. The news reports indicate that the violence in northern Iraq has escalated at the same time the Director of National Intelligence released a new assessment that al-Qaida has regenerated key elements of its homeland capability. As long as our troops are mired in policing an Iraq civil war, they cannot focus on the enemy that attacked us nearly 6 years ago, an enemy that, regrettably, has regenerated its attack capacity since 9/11.

Furthermore, contrary to your previous assertions, there is a long, bipartisan tradition of allowing Senators to offer defense-related amendments on the Defense authorization bill without the obstruction Senate Republicans are employing today. The record also clearly shows that both Senate Democrats and Republicans have recently foregone the opportunity to block action on important Iraq-related amendments.

For example, just last year the Senate voted up or down on two Iraq-related amendments on the Defense authorization bill. Additionally, Senate Democrats did not place a 60-vote hurdle in front of Republican amendments to strike Iraq policy language in the Iraq supplemental spending bill, nor did votes on final passage of the Iraq supplemental require 60 votes.

Therefore, I renew the proposal I offered to you recently to permit the Senate to act on a series of amendments pertaining to Iraq. Under my proposal, the Senate would hold up-or-down votes on the bipartisan amendments offered by Senators Levin and Reed, Lugar and Warner, Salazar and Alexander, and Nelson and Collins. There are other amendments Republican and Democratic Senators wish to offer related to Iraq, and I would be willing to work with you to ensure these amendments also receive up-or-down votes.

For the sake of our troops and the American people, I hope you reconsider your decision to obstruct Senate action on critical amendments that would change the course of the war in Iraq.

We have completed a vote, yet another example of an Iraq-related amendment with a majority vote. We didn't demand a 60-vote margin on Cornyn. It is another example of how amendments should be handled; that is, with a simple majority vote.

The American people deserve up-or-down votes, yes or no: Vote on the amendment. The Levin-Reed amendment is a bipartisan amendment. For me, one of the most significant paragraphs in that legislation was authored by Senator HAGEL of Nebraska. It basically says we need to have the United Nations involved in this intractable civil war. It is a wonderfully written paragraph that strengthens this bipartisan amendment.

We have three Republican cosponsors of this amendment.

A vote on this bipartisan amendment will be a vote to change course. A ''no'' vote would be a vote to stay the course, to continue the President's failed strategy indefinitely.

President Bush's term of office is winding down. We should not have to wait until he completes his term of office before we change course on this war in Iraq. A ''yes'' vote on this bipartisan amendment would finally bind President Bush to responsibly reduce combat operations and return our focus on the real and growing threats we face. That is why I, once again, request unanimous consent to move to an up-or-down vote on Levin-Reed, along with the amendments my Republican colleagues wish to offer and other Democrats who wish to offer amendments.

I ask unanimous consent that amendment No. 2088 be withdrawn and at 6:30 p.m. today the Senate vote on the Levin-Reed amendment, No. 2087, with the time between now and then equally divided in the usual form, with no second-degree amendments in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, either yes or no on this?

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, reserving the right to object. I believe I do have the right to at least explain my reservation.

Mr. REID. Regular order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader has asked for the regular order. The Senator has to object or not.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I do object. I would like to ask if the distinguished majority leader will give me an opportunity to at least respond to some of the things he had to say. I think that would be the way we usually do business around here.

Mr. REID. I will be complete in a matter of minutes. We will have a filibuster. He can speak for as many hours as he wants or minutes he wants. We are now at the time when the time for speeches has ended. It is time for voting. We want a vote on the Levin-Reed amendment. That is what we want. We have had a lot of good words from the other side of the aisle. We want some votes, and that is what this is all about. This is not the time for reserving. Voting—that is what we want.

Mr. LOTT. If the majority leader yielded the floor, I seek recognition.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Yes, once again what we have seen with my friend from Mississippi, and he is my friend—we have seen Republican leadership resort to technical maneuvers to block progress on this crucial amendment. It would be one thing for Republicans to vote

against this amendment. It is their right to do so. If they honestly believe stay the course is the right strategy, they have the right to vote no. But now Republicans are using a filibuster to block us from even voting on an amendment that could bring this war to a responsible end. They are protecting the President rather than protecting our troops. They are denying us an up-or-down vote, yes or no, a vote on the most important issue our country faces today.

I am speaking today for the American people; 67 percent of the American people think the surge has been a failure—Democrats; not even a majority of Republicans favor the surge. Of course, a significant majority of Independents recognize that the surge has not been good. We are speaking for the American people on this bipartisan amendment.

We have no choice, as I have indicated earlier, but to stay in session. The Republicans have a right to talk. Let them talk. It is their filibuster. But we will continue to speak in spite of that. When they finish their filibuster, we will still be speaking, continue speaking out on behalf of our troops and all Americans—all Americans: Democrats, a majority of the Republicans, and the Independents—to continue requesting consent for an up-or-down vote on our amendment to end this war.

I don't want to make any more calls to the families in Nevada who have lost a loved one. Tens of thousands of our bold, brave Americans have been injured, wounded—a third of them grievously. When we hear that there was an improvised explosive device and two soldiers were killed, it doesn't talk about the maiming of other soldiers. Thousands—thousands of American troops have lost multiple limbs. We have heard from the experts about the head trauma. I can't get out of my mind my trip to Walter Reed, where a woman said: I have been in the military—I have been in the Army for 22 years. I have a master's degree. My specialty was numbers. I worked in the Pentagon with numbers. She said: I don't even know my own phone number. She said: I have never had my skin pierced, but I have been knocked down; I have been in these explosions numerous times. I have no mind anymore.

That is what this amendment is all about—to change course. Is it necessary we wait 60 more days until this magic day in September to change course? How many more Americans soldiers are going to be killed? How many are going to be maimed, wounded, lose their arms, lose their minds? So we have no choice but to stay in session and continue speaking out on behalf of our troops and all Americans, to continue requesting consent for an up-or-down vote on this amendment.

Our troops in Baghdad are 8 hours ahead of us here on the east coast. As we begin our debate in earnest tonight, our troops are going to be waking up. They will be waking up to the 1,582nd day of this war. They will wake up, and it is very hot in Iraq this time of the year. They are a long ways away in some foreign land we call Iraq, far from their families, and facing, every minute of the day, danger.

This is not a war where the troops gather and face each other. This is a war in an urban setting, most of the time, where people are blown up driving vehicles up streets buying groceries in a marketplace. What happened yesterday? In a place that there had been no violence, more than 100 were killed and more than 200 injured. The picture in the paper—there is a hole where that bomb went off as big and deep as this Chamber we are in today.

The violence is escalating. The new report is out. It was leaked last week; it is out today. ''Al-Qaida stronger,'' so says the report. The President disagrees, but that is what the report says. Can't have it both ways.

So our valiant troops are going to wake up with this war facing them—more than any one of us can understand, with the exception of maybe Senator WEBB, Senator KERRY, maybe JOHN MCCAIN—I am sorry if I missed others—Senator INOUYE, Senator STEVENS. Senator HAGEL, of course—with his brother—fought in Vietnam. They are going to wake up, as I said, far from their families, facing constant danger, for what? For what? Mr. President, 69 percent of the Iraqi people don't want us there. They are saying we are doing more harm than good. Al Maliki said a couple of days ago he can do without us. We can leave whatever time we want. They can handle the situation with the billions and billions of dollars we have spent training Iraqi troops.

We as Senators owe it to each of our men and women in Iraq to debate the war openly and honestly, and we owe it to all Americans to finally vote for a responsible end to the war that has been so long in coming. I hope by the time this night is through and dawn has broken that we will have the opportunity to vote.

We are willing to vote before that. Whenever we have an opportunity, we are going to ask reasonably that we have a vote on the bipartisan amendment. It is the right thing to do. It is what the American people deserve.

We are spending, now, $12 billion a month. Is that enough to get our attention? We are trying to do other things. What are we trying to do? Get health care for kids. The President is very concerned about these appropriations bills which we are going to try to pass. Where is the money to pass them, giving the American people what they deserve? It has been taken in the sands of Iraq, to the tune of more than a half a trillion dollars.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Will the Senator yield for a question without the Senator yielding his right to the floor?

Mr. LOTT. Does the majority leader yield the floor?

Mr. REID. I will not do that. I am happy to yield for a question.

Mr. LEAHY. I ask the distinguished majority leader if he has not had experiences similar to mine. I was in Vermont over the weekend, as I am most weekends. I get stopped by people in the grocery store or putting gas in the car—we are a small State, and you tend to know everybody; they are Republicans and they are Democrats—and I get asked the constant question, if the President will not listen to us about getting out, can you people in Congress vote on something? Can you vote? Can you either vote to keep us there or vote to get us out, but stand up? My answer to them is we are prepared to vote on our side of the aisle. Senator REID and those following him are prepared to vote, but we are stopped from voting.

I am wondering whether the distinguished majority leader, when he goes home to Nevada, whether he doesn't hear similar sentiments about: Let us vote. Let us vote.

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, the distinguished chair of the Judiciary Committee, I don't have to go home. People call me. I talk to my brothers. They tell me what they think is wrong. I talk to my friends. I have tried every weekend when I have some time and I am here—I try to reach some people in Nevada I haven't talked to in a while. They say exactly what my friend from Vermont says: Get us out of there. Get us out of there.

That is what this Levin-Reed amendment is all about, to change course in Iraq. The American people deserve that.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. REID. I am happy to yield for a question.

Mr. LOTT. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. I ask the majority leader, first, he has focused on the most important part of this debate, the war that is claiming American lives. But, unfortunately, this debate also focuses on the rules of the Senate. I ask the Senate majority leader if he is aware of the fact that in the last 7 years that the Defense authorization bill has been brought to the floor, every amendment which has been offered was subject to a majority vote, simple majority vote, except in five instances which required a budget waiver, a specific provision in our Senate rules when there were budget waivers required as with the minimum wage and so forth, 60 votes. But is the majority leader aware of the fact that in every authorization bill, Defense authorization bill, in the years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007, that every amendment has been judged by a majority vote and that the decision by the Republicans to obstruct the majority vote on this is the first time in this long period of time that we have ever done this on a Defense authorization bill?

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, during the years you have mentioned, there have been democratically controlled Senates, Republican controlled Senates, but it doesn't matter who is controlling the Senate, we have always done these bills with simple majority votes.

For example, I can remember last year we had one vote, as I recall, on minimum wage because it required 60 votes to waive a budget point of order. So this new thing about 60 votes on everything is something that has been ginned up in the minds of people who want to avoid votes to change the course in Iraq.

That is what it is all about. The war is not going well. We all know that. We need to sit back and understand that it needs to change course. There is a column written today, I read it, op-ed about President Bush being stubborn. And he is. We all know that. That is not all together always a bad trait.

But, boy, I will tell you, he is sure showing his streak of stubbornness on this. He was unwilling to listen to anyone who disagreed with him, and there are a number of people who have been dumped from the administration as a result. Someone who suggested the war would cost $150 to $200 billion, Lindsey, he was gone quick.

We had one of our good generals who suggested we needed a lot more troops there. Out the door he went. We could go through a list of people who disagreed with the President who hit the road.

I would hope that on this issue, when so many people all across this country, on a bipartisan basis, agree that something needs to change in Iraq, my friends, the Republicans, recognize that they also have responsibility to the American people more so than the President.

Now, I would say this. My friend, Senator LOTT, is still here. I am going to yield the floor and whoever grabs the floor can have it. I say to my friend, Senator LOTT, who has always been a gentleman to me in the many areas we have worked together here: This was a time that I wanted a ''yes'' or ''no'' response. He is a real pro in here. He knows that he can get the floor again to explain whatever his position was. This was in the middle of my speech. That is why I followed the rules.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL.) The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. The Senator from Nevada, the distinguished majority leader and my friend for many years, points out that in previous years, the Defense authorization bill was passed without requirements for a 60-vote majority. There is a simple answer to that. We never took up an issue such as this on the Defense authorization bill.

In fact, our focus and our attention was, for 45 years, providing men and women who are serving in the military with what they needed to defend this Nation. Instead—instead, of doing what is necessary, including the 3.5-percent pay raise, including the Wounded Warriors legislation on it to take care of our veterans—we are now gridlocked in the Senate because the Senator from Nevada knows he is not going to pass a withdrawal from Iraq on this bill. If he did, the President would veto the bill, because the President has said it. We all know that in September this issue is going to come to a head, whether I happen to favor that or not.

Most people believe that September is a time where we could make the kinds of judgments necessary to see whether we are making the kind of progress that will justify continued effort in this new strategy, which I, of course, would remind my colleagues again, the last part of which was put in place a few weeks ago.

Of course, we did not have requirements for 60-vote majorities in the past few years because no one had the temerity to put an issue such as this on the very vital needs of the men and women in the military to do their job. So, of course, there was not a controversial necessity for a 60-vote majority.

I am happy to tell my friend from Mississippi that Senator LEVIN and I are moving forward with clearing amendments so we can, we hope, wrap up this bill by the end of this week. I hope that once this display that is going to take place tonight, all night, is concluded, and there is not sufficient votes in order to get the Levin-Reed amendment passed, at some point we can go back to the Defense authorization bill and get them the 3.5 percent pay raise they have earned; get them that MRAP equipment that they need; get this Wounded Warrior legislation through the Senate and to the desk of the President of the United States.

We never grow tired, nor should we, of praising the men and women in the military, particularly those who have sacrificed so much. All of us are embarrassed and ashamed at what happened at Walter Reed. Well, let's pass this Wounded Warrior legislation on this bill and get it done.

Who is holding up passage of the Defense authorization bill? Who is requiring us to stay up all night to discuss it? My friends, this is not necessary. We all know that General Petraeus was affirmed in his position by the Senate by an overwhelming vote. General Petraeus, at the time of his hearings, said we were going to have a new strategy—that strategy is called surge—and that it would require additional troops.

He also said at that time it would take time, that it would take a period of time before we would know whether it succeeded. Here we are, literally weeks after the last part of this new strategy is in place, the last detachment of an increase in troops, and we are telling them to set a date for withdrawal.

Now, you know, I share the frustration that my friend from Nevada stated about a failed policy. It was a failed policy. The Rumsfeld-Casey policy strategy was doomed to failure, and some of us recognized that and stated that at the time. We said we had to have a new strategy. It has to be the classic counterinsurgency strategy if we are going to succeed in Iraq.

Well, we got a new general. We got a new strategy. There are signs of success. There are clearly some signs of progress, and those are readily apparent. Now, is the Maliki Government acting in the way we want them to? No, they are not. Is it disappointing that they are not? Absolutely, it is disappointing.

But as far as Anbar Province is concerned, as far as some parts of Baghdad are concerned, yes, there is some progress which has been purchased at great and tragic cost, the sacrifice of young American's lives.

I would like to again assure my friend of many years, from Nevada, I understand the frustration that he shows is shared by many Americans. Our failure and our employment of a failed strategy for more than 3 years is well articulated. But I also would plead with my colleagues to at least know that we are not going to stop this now. We are not going stop it now. Even if the majority leader got the 60 votes and got this included in the bill in some way, the President of the United States would veto it. We do not want that to happen. We do not want that to happen.

We know that in September, whether I happen to like it or not—I would like to personally give it more time than September—we know that in September this whole issue is going to come to a head. Here we are in the middle of July. Can't we sit down and work out the amendments in a way that Senator LEVIN and I and Senator WARNER and previous chairmen and ranking members have for the last 20 years, get this bill done, get it out and get it to the President's desk? Then we go into recess. We come back in September. I think that that is not an unreasonable path to follow.

So, my friends, we will continue to debate this issue all night tonight. I understand that. Hopefully, when the majority sees that, the leader sees there is not the votes, maybe we could then get down to the nuts and bolts of the Defense authorization bill of which at last count there are over 100 amendments pending that Members have on both sides of the aisle, they want to be considered and voted on.

I fear—I fear—that the majority leader, because of a lack of time, may feel it necessary to pull the bill from the floor. I think that would not be in any way helpful to our Nation's national security interests.

My friends, if we could lower the rhetoric around here a bit, let us sit down and talk about the best way to proceed, recognizing that September will be a very important point, and pass this authorization bill and not for

the first time in 45 years have us not do what we need to do for our Nation's security and the men and women who are serving.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I have the greatest respect for the Senator from Arizona. We disagree on a number of issues. We have worked together on many others. I would like to respond to several things he said. Senator MCCAIN asked us who is holding up this bill? Well, those who followed the debate know that a few minutes ago the majority leader, Senator REID of Nevada, asked to move to vote on the amendment by Senators LEVIN and REED. He asked for unanimous consent to move to a vote within a matter of hours.

Where did the objection come from? From the Republican side of the aisle. So in answering Senator MCCAIN's question, who is holding up this bill, it is your side of the aisle, and specifically the Senator sitting next to you who objected to moving to a vote. That is what is holding up this bill.

The second question asked by the Senator from Arizona: Why are we debating the war on this bill? This bill happens to be the authorization for appropriations for fiscal year 2007 for military activities of the Department of Defense. If you do not debate the war in Iraq on the bill authorizing appropriations for the Department of Defense, where would you turn, the agriculture bill? I don't think so. This is the appropriate bill.

The Senator from Arizona has made that point. Included within the amendments to this bill are provision for our warriors who are coming home wounded. I have been part of putting that together. I thank Senator LEVIN, I thank Senator MCCAIN. It is an important provision. But let's be very honest. The reason they are coming home wounded is because there is a war. It is fit and proper for us to ask whether that war is being waged effectively and whether our policy should be changed in this bill? If not on this bill, what bill would we use? I think, frankly, that many would rather we did not debate this at all; give permission to the President to wage the war as he wants as long as he wants: step out of the way, Congress, the President is in charge.

I don't accept that. Each of us represents our own State, represents people who expect us to articulate their point of view and speak for them. We do not cede all power in this Government to one branch, not to the executive branch. We have our own responsibility.

Let me say a word about waiting until September. Waiting until September, what difference would it make if we wait until September? What could it possibly cost us if we wait until September? Well, it is likely to cost us 200 American lives. We are losing 100 Americans, on average, every single month of this war. It is likely to cost us 2,000 more injured soldiers; that is what 2 months means.

It is likely to cost us $24 billion from America's Treasury. It is not a matter of waiting for a convenient moment chosen by some to make this decision. Many of us believe this decision should be made now and it should be made here, and it should be made with the Levin-Reed amendment which is a reasonable bipartisan amendment.

The Republican side objects. They are filibustering. We have said this will not be the most modern form of filibuster. This goes back to the roots of the Senate. We will stay in business during the period of time when we are supposed to be debating. Whether we go to this amendment, we will invite members from both said of the aisle to express their point of view. I will tell you this, the people I represent in my State, the ones whom I meet, as Senator LEAHY said of his voters in Vermont, want us to change this policy in this war. They want us to bring this war to an end. They understand, as we must understand, we never bargained for where we are today. America was misled into this war. We were told there were weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, they threatened the Middle East, they threatened America. Not a single one has been found.

We were told that this dictator, Saddam Hussein, was the reason for this invasion. He is long gone—dug out of a hole in the ground, put on trial, and executed by his own people. Yet we still stay in this war, a war that has changed so drastically to the point that it is now a civil war and our soldiers, as good as they are, are caught in the crossfire of sectarian violence, now victims of al-Qaida terrorism that did not exist when we invaded Iraq, not in that country.

They are the ones who are the victims of bad planning and bad decisions. It is interesting to me how many Republican Senators see how poorly executed this war has been.

We all know our military is the best. But when it comes to the Commander in Chief and the generals, so many bad decisions have been made at the expense of our troops. It is interesting to me, they concede that point and yet want to continue: Let's just wait a few more months, maybe another year, maybe a year and a half, and then see what happens.

I was one of 23 Senators who voted against this authorization to go to war.

Mr. BYRD. So was I.

Mr. DURBIN. Senator BYRD, I remember your leadership on this issue as well. I can tell you it was not the most popular position to be in at the time.

Mr. BYRD. No.

Mr. DURBIN. The overwhelming majority of the American people heard their President say weapons of mass destruction, ruthless and bloodthirsty dictator, and said: Yes, maybe we should invade. But it didn't add up. It didn't add up in terms of the threat or in terms of whether we were prepared to accept the reality that it is far easier to get into a war than it is to get out of one. Here we are in the fifth year of a war that has lasted longer than World War II, a war with no end in sight. This President's response: Send more American soldiers into harm's way in Iraq.

That is unacceptable. It is time for the Iraqis to stand and defend their own nation. They will not do that until American soldiers start coming home. That is what the Levin-Reed amendment is about.

I am sorry the Republican side has initiated this filibuster to block a vote on this important amendment. I am sorry they are insisting on a 60-vote margin which was rarely, if ever, used on a Defense authorization bill over the last 7 years. Those are the facts. They have done it because their ranks are starting to change. Three Republican Senators have now stepped out and said they will join us in this effort to change the policy of the war. Many more back home have said they have decided we need a new policy in Iraq. We want to give them a chance for a vote that is significant.

Will the President veto it if we pass it? Probably. But does that mean we shouldn't try? Don't we owe it to these soldiers and their families and to our Nation to change this failed policy before it claims more American lives, sends more American warriors back wounded from battle and costs Americans the treasure we have gathered in the taxes of our citizens?

I say to my friend from Arizona, we see this war differently, but I think it is clear who is holding up this bill: the Republican minority with their filibuster. Why this bill? Because if you didn't debate a war on a Defense authorization bill, where would you debate it? Should we wait until September? The cost is too high.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I was just given information by my staff. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DISPOSITION OF MEASURES UNDERGOING ROLLCALL VOTES IN THE SENATE, 109TH CONGRESS

109TH CONGRESS, 1ST SESSION (2005)

Number of measures on which there were rollcall votes in 2005: 40

Passed without a vote on cloture or another 60-vote requirement: 29

(1) London Terrorist Attacks (S. Res. 193; passed 76–0)

(2) Homeland Security Appropriations (H.R. 2360; 96–1)

(3) Burma Sanctions Extension (H.J. Res. 52; 97–1)

(4) Americans With Disabilities Act Commemoration (S. Res. 207; 87–0)

(5) CAFTA (S. 1307: 54–45; H.R. 3045: 55–45)

(6) Budget Resolution (S. Con. Res. 18: passed 51–49; Conference Report, H. Con. Res. 95: passed 52–47)

(7) Legislative Branch Appropriations (H.R. 2985 Conference Report; 96–4)
(8) Hurricane Katrina Resolution (S. Res. 233; 94–0)
(9) Katrina Emergency Supplemental (H.R. 3673; 97–0)
(10) Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations (H.R. 2862; bill passed 91–4; Conference Report passed 94–5)
(11) Agriculture Appropriations (H.R. 2744; bill passed 97–2, Conference Report passed 81–18)
(12) Military Construction Appropriations (H.R. 2528; 98–0)
(13) Customs Treaty (Treaty Doc. 108–6; 87–0)
(14) Transportation-Treasury-HUD Appropriations (H.R. 3058; 93–1)
(15) Foreign Operations Appropriations (H.R. 3057; bill passed 98–1; Conference Report passed 91–0)
(16) Energy and Water Appropriations (H.R. 2419; bill passed 92–3; Conference Report passed 84–4)
(17) Pension Reform (S. 1783; 97–2)
(18) Tax Relief Act (S. 2020; 64–33)
(19) Iraqi Election (S. Res. 38; passed 93–0)
(20) Class Action Reform (S. 5; 72–26)
(21) Genetic Nondiscrimination (S. 306; 98–0)
(22) Disapproval of Canadian Beef Rule (S.J. Res. 4; 52–46)
(23) Vocational Education Reauthorization (S. 250; 99–0)
(24) Mourning the Death of Pope John Paul II (S. Res. 95; 98–0)
(25) Airbus Subsidies Resolutions (S. Con. Res. 25; 96–0)
(26) Interior Appropriations (H.R. 2361; 94–0)
(27) Continuing Resolution (H.J. Res. 68; passed by voice vote after a vote on an amendment)
(28) 2nd Continuing Resolution (H.J. Res 72; passed by voice vote after a vote on an amendment)
(29) Deficit Reduction Omnibus Reconciliation (S. 1932; bill passed 52–47; the Conference Report passed 50–50 with Vice President Cheney voting aye)

Passed after a cloture vote and/or other 60-vote requirement: 7

(1) Firearm Liability Reform (S. 397; cloture on the motion to proceed invoked 66–32; bill passed 65–31)
(2) Defense Appropriations (H.R. 2863; cloture invoked 94–4; bill passed 97–0; cloture on the Conference Report failed 56–44; after ANWR provisions removed, Conference Report passed 93–0)
(3) Labor-HHS Appropriations (H.R. 3010; cloture invoked 97–0; bill passed 94–3)
(4) Bankruptcy Reform (cloture invoked 69–31; bill passed 74–25)
(5) Highway Bill (H.R. 3; cloture on the motion to proceed invoked 94–6; cloture on the Inhofe substitute invoked 92–7; motion to waive the Budget Act on the Inhofe substitute agreed to 76–22; bill passed 89–11; Conference Report passed 91–4)
(6) Emergency Supplemental (H.R. 1268; cloture invoked 100–0; bill passed 99–0; Conference Report passed 100–0)
(7) Energy Bill (H.R. 6; cloture invoked 92–4; bill passed 85–12; motion to waive the Budget Act for consideration of the Conference Report agreed to 71–29; Conference Report passed 74–26)

Passed after failure of cloture: 1

(1) Defense Authorization (S. 1042; cloture failed 50–48 on July 26; the bill later passed 98–0 November 15)

Defeated by cloture: 1

(1) Patriot Act Conference Report (H.R. 3199; cloture failed 52–47; the bill was passed in 2006)

Defeated on an up-down vote: 1

(1) Mercury Regulation Resolution of Disapproval (47–51)

Amendments voted on but no final action taken on the bill: 1

(1) Foreign Affairs Authorization (S. 600)

109TH CONGRESS, 2ND SESSION (2006)

Number of measures on which there were rollcall votes in 2006: 38

Passed without a vote on cloture or another 60-vote requirement: 16

(1) Tax Hike Prevention (H.R. 4297; bill passed 66–31; Conference Report passed 54–44)
(2) Patriot Act Short-Term Extension (H.R. 4659; 95–1)
(3) Debt Limit (H.J. Res. 47; 52–48)
(4) U.S.-Oman FTA (S. 3569: 60–34; H.R. 5684: 62–32)
(5) Homeland Security Appropriations (H.R. 5441; 100–0)
(6) Human Fetus Farming Prohibition (S. 3504; 100–0)
(7) Nondestructive Stem Cell Research (S. 2754; 100–0)
(8) Stem Cell Research (H.R. 810; 63–37)
(9) Water Resources (H.R. 5117; passed by voice vote after votes on amendments)
(10) Voting Rights Act (H.R. 9; 98–0)
(11) Pension Reform (H.R. 4; 93–5)
(12) Defense Appropriations (H.R. 5631; bill passed 98–0; Conference Report passed 98–0)
(13) Budget Resolution (S. Con. Res. 83; 51–49)
(14) Interrogation and Trial of Terrorists (S. 3930; 65–34)
(15) India Nuclear Energy (S. 3709; 85–12)
(16) Military Construction (H.R. 5385; passed by voice vote after a vote on a motion to request the attendance of absent Senators)

Passed after a cloture vote and/or other 60-vote requirement: 10

(1) Patriot Act Additional Amendments (S. 2271; cloture on the motion to proceed invoked 96–3; cloture on the bill invoked 69–30; bill passed 95–4)
(2) Patriot Act Conference Report (H.R. 3199; cloture invoked 84–15; bill passed 89–10)
(3) LIHEAP Aid (S. 2320; motion to waive the Budget Act agreed to 66–31; cloture invoked 75–25; bill passed by voice)
(4) Lobbying Reform (S. 2349; cloture was first rejected 51–47 due to a Dubai port amendment, after that issue was resolved, cloture was invoked 81–16 and the bill passed 90–8)
(5) Emergency supplemental (H.R. 4939; cloture invoked 92–4; bill passed 77–21)
(6) Illegal and Legal Immigration (S. 2611; cloture invoked 73–25; bill passed 62–36)
(7) Defense Authorization (S. 2766; cloture invoked 98–1; bill passed 96–0)
(8) Gulf of Mexico OCS (S. 3711; cloture on the motion to proceed invoked 86–12; cloture on the bill invoked 72–23; bill passed 71–25)
(9) Port Security (H.R. 4954; cloture invoked 98–0; bill passed 98–0)
(10) Secure Fence Act (H.R. 6061; cloture on the motion to proceed invoked 94–0; cloture on the bill invoked 71–28; bill passed 80–19)

Defeated by cloture or other 60-vote requirement: 10

(1) Asbestos compensation (S. 852; cloture on the motion to proceed invoked 98–1; motion to waive the Budget Act failed 58–41)
(2) Illegal Immigration (S. 2454; cloture on the substitute amendment failed 39–60; cloture on the motion to commit failed 38–60; cloture on the bill failed 36–62)
(3) Medical Care Access (S. 22; cloture on the motion to proceed failed, 48–42)
(4) Mothers & Babies Medical Care (S. 23; cloture on the motion to proceed failed, 49–44)
(5) Small Business Health Insurance (S. 1955; cloture on the motion to proceed invoked, 96–2; cloture on the bill failed, 55–43)
(6) Marriage Constitutional Amendment (S.J. Res. 1; cloture on the motion to proceed failed, 49–48)
(7) Death Tax Repeal (H.R. 8; cloture on the motion to proceed failed, 57–41)
(8) Race Government for Native Hawaiians (S. 147; cloture on the motion to proceed failed, 56–41)
(9) Death Tax/Minimum Wage/Extenders (H.R. 5970; cloture on the motion to proceed failed, 56–42)
(10) Child Custody Protection Act (S. 403; bill passed 65–34; cloture on the motion to concur with the House amendment to the bill failed 57–42; bill died)

Defeated on an up-down vote: 1

(1) Flag Protection Constitutional Amendment (S.J. Res. 12; defeated 66–34; ⅔ present and voting required)

Amendments voted on and no final action taken on the bill: 1

(1) Agriculture Appropriations (H.R. 5384)

Mr. McCAIN. Passed after a cloture vote and/or other 60-vote requirement in 2005, seven; passed after a cloture vote and/or a 60-vote requirement in 2006, 10; defeated by cloture or 60-vote requirement, also in 2006, 10.

It is clear that when the Senator from Illinois was in the minority, they used the 60-vote provision as well, and that is their right to do so. I don't in any way object to their having done that. I do object strenuously to somehow conveying the impression that this is a ''filibuster'' because we require 60 votes, that this is some Earth-shattering, precedent-shattering procedure. In fact, it is not. In fact, the Senator from Illinois knows very well that 60 votes is often required, whether it be a budget point of order or whether a cloture vote, and it has been used quite often by the minority as a tool to assert their rights as the minority. I understand that.

The Senator from Illinois talks about the bill that this has to be on. This is either the eighth or ninth time we have brought up Iraq. He didn't need the authorization bill to do it then. It is the right of the majority to bring up whatever they want, whenever they want. I can assure my colleagues, the Defense authorization bill will probably not be on the floor in September, and one thing I am pretty confident of is that we will be taking up the issue of Iraq in September. So to somehow say that this is appropriate, it is not appropriate because it is controversial, and we know it will not be passed with a provision that requires what the Senator from Illinois wants on it. It will never become law because the President will veto it in the unlikely—in fact, highly unlikely—situation where this bill was passed by both Houses of Congress.

What we are doing—have no doubt about it—is keeping the 3.5-percent pay raise from going into law. We are keeping the wounded warrior legislation from being enacted by both Houses and us acting as quickly as possible. The Senator from Illinois, I believe, and all other Senators voted on behalf of the nomination of General Petraeus in February, knowing full well what General Petraeus's strategy was. That was

very well articulated. So now we find ourselves some months later saying: Well, we have to end it.

The distinguished majority leader, who is no longer on the floor, declared the war lost. I was astonished. Because if we lost the war, then somebody won. Does that mean that al-Qaida has won the war? I don't think the 160,000 young men and women who are serving in Iraq, whom I visited about a week ago, think the war is lost. I don't think the majority of Americans do either. Are they frustrated by what has happened here? Of course, they are frustrated. They want to bring it to an end. But it is the obligation of people such as me to point out what happens when we withdraw in 120 days.

Literally, in the view of every expert on national security, we will pay a much heavier price in the long run. Chaos, genocide will ensue. Quite often I hear from the other side: What is plan B, if the surge doesn't work?

What is plan B if the withdrawal results in chaos and genocide in the region? According to most experts—including Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, General Zinni according to most people who have spent their lives on national security issues, it will be chaos and genocide. What is plan B there?

I hope after the show is over tomorrow morning sometime—and it is clear to all that we will not set a 120-day withdrawal date from Iraq on this legislation—we will then be able to sit down and move forward on the bill so that we can get it passed into law. That is what we should be doing. To somehow think that we have not required, as the majority leader on many occasions required, 60 votes for passage of an amendment or legislation, of course, flies in the face of the clear record which I have just asked to be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

America is now at a crossroads. America is now at a point where, according to Natan Sharansky:

> A precipitous withdrawal of U.S. forces could lead to a bloodbath . . .

From Anthony Zinni, who was opposed to us going into Iraq:

> . . . reality is that we simply cannot pull out [of Iraq], as much as we may want to. The consequences of a destabilized and chaotic Iraq, sitting in a critical region of the world, could have catastrophic implications . . . there is no short-term solution.

We have a system of government where the military is subordinate to the civilian leadership, and it should be. It is the most appropriate way. But to completely ignore, as apparently my friend from Illinois is, the leaders whom we have appointed to fight over there and do the dying and carry out the leadership responsibilities, to completely ignore their advice and counsel, they are on the ground. They know what is going on.

General Lynch, 3rd ID commander, says:

> [pulling out before the mission was accomplished] would be a mess.

By the way, these will be the guys who will be required to clean up the mess, if we pass this resolution and we have a mess.

Continuing from General Lynch:

> . . . you'd find the enemy regaining ground, reestablishing sanctuaries, building more IEDs . . . and the violence would escalate.

I have already quoted before from Henry Kissinger.

General Lynch:

> [our soldiers] want to fight terrorists here, so they don't have to fight terrorists back home . . . I now have the forces I need to conduct that mission.

General Lynch, the 3rd ID commander, says he has the troops and the wherewithal and the success to get the job done.

The Senator from Illinois wants to say, no, you have to come home in 120 days. I don't think that is right. I don't think General Lynch is reading any polls. I think General Lynch and General Petraeus are fighting an enemy that, according to them, they will be fighting here if we have a precipitous withdrawal.

General Lynch:

> . . . surge forces are giving us the capability we have now to take the fight to the enemy . . . the enemy only responds to force, and we now have that force.

That is the force that the Senator from Illinois wants to withdraw within 120 days.

> We can conduct detailed kinetic strikes, we can do cordon and searches, and we can deny the enemy sanctuaries . . . If those surge forces go away that capability goes away, and the Iraqi security forces aren't ready yet to do that [mission].

Brent Scowcroft, who opposed our entry into the Iraq conflict:

> [reduction of American presence in Iraq] should follow success in our efforts, not the calendar or the performance of others.

I hope that sometime my friends who were involved in this debate will listen to the people we have delegated to lead the best Armed Forces in the history of mankind who are doing one of the most difficult jobs in history.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I have been waiting 1 hour to respond to some comments that were directed at me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. LOTT. I had hoped that in this debate and in this Congress, we would be able to maintain some semblance, some modicum of courtesy. But it appears we have lost it all. I have been in Congress 35 years. I have been in the Senate 19 years. I have been in a variety of positions. Never before have I been denied or did I ever deny any Senator the opportunity to have a reservation on his right to object to a unanimous consent request. Now that has occurred. So that courtesy, one of the few remaining ones we have left in this institution, is gone.

Let me correct some of the things that have been said here that the record will show, certainly, in the debate. The other side speaks about a new standard for 60 votes. That is interesting.

During this Congress, 47 clotures have been filed. In the 106th Congress, there were 71; 107th, 72; 108th 62; the 109th, 68. This is not a new phenomenon. It has occurred all the time, regardless of whether Republicans or Democrats were in the majority. Even Senator REID said twice this year:

> In the Senate it has always been the case you need 60 votes. I don't have 60 votes—

The particular issue he was referring to—

> 60 votes are required for just about everything.

That was what Senator REID had to say earlier this year.

We are ready to vote. We could have a vote on this amendment, the Levin-Reed amendment, right now. We are ready to go. We can have the cloture vote that would be scheduled in the morning in an hour, to be fair to everybody, so we could have wrapup statements. Everybody knows we can have that vote now, or 5:30 or 6:30, or in the morning. I have been involved in these all-night discussions. Interestingly, the last time we had one of these so-called all-night debates, it was because the Democrats wanted to require 60 votes to confirm a Federal judge, which had not been the practice throughout the history of this great country.

I understand about the 60-vote requirement. Nobody is surprised by this. We have already had 60-vote votes taken on amendments on this bill.

First, before the majority whip leaves, let me ask unanimous consent that the cloture vote scheduled for the morning occur at 5:30 this afternoon.

Mr. DURBIN. I object.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I have not yielded the floor, so I wish to go ahead and complete my remarks on the broader issues that have been raised here.

We debated in March and April and May whether we should confirm General Petraeus, whether we should go forward with the funds that our troops needed to do the job, and whether the surge could go forward. The vote was 80 to 14 in May to go forward with trying to bring down the violence, get control and, of course, encourage the Iraqi government to do more. We confirmed General Petraeus unanimously. They are already saying the surge has failed when, as a matter of fact, the troops that were supposed to be involved in that effort have only been there for some 3 weeks. So I think it is premature and unfair to the men and women who are there on the ground doing the job. We need to have the debate, allow both sides to have their say, but it is going to require 60 votes, and then we can go on to the underlying bill.

This is the Defense authorization bill. Every year we pass the Defense authorization bill. Yet I think we have had maybe one amendment even considered that has to do with the underlying bill, which provides funds and authorization for our troops for the

equipment they need, the supplies, the ships, the planes, the pay raise, and quality of life. That is something we have to come to terms with. We have to have a debate on amendments that affect this bill. We could work out how to do that.

Somebody said amendments are being blocked. As a matter of fact, Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN are clearing amendments right now. The process is underway. So I would say I am very disappointed in the way this issue is being handled. I must say I am even surprised we have allowed it to deteriorate to this level, but I think we will get through it. The Congress is not going to precipitously mandate that our troops begin to be withdrawn. We are going to go forward and allow them the time to do the job. In September and October we will debate this issue again, as we should. But to come back again after having just voted in May to allow us to go forward and say here we are in July and the surge has failed, I think that is a terrible mistake.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, since the minority whip is ready to vote, I ask unanimous consent to vote on the Levin-Reed amendment No. 2087 at 6 p.m. with the time between now and then equally divided in the usual form.

Mr. LOTT. I object, Madam President.

Mr. MCCAIN. Reserving the right to object, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the objection is heard, and I think it is very clear. You cannot object to the vote, say you are ready to vote, and then object to the vote. You cannot have it both ways.

The fact is, when you look at these past votes on the Defense authorization bill, they don't make the case that the Senator from Arizona and the Senator from Mississippi say. I will go through each one of them:

For the year 2000, considering the fiscal year 2001 Defense authorization bill, of 14 amendments on which there were rollcall votes, only 1 required 60 votes because it involved a budget waiver. In 2001, when we considered the fiscal year 2002 Defense authorization bill, of the 2 amendments on which there were rollcall votes, all were simple majorities; no 60-vote requirements. In 2002, for the 2003 Defense authorization bill, of the 5 amendments on which there were rollcall votes, only 1 60-vote requirement; again, a specific budget waiver, which is not the case with the pending amendment. In 2003, when we considered the 2004 Defense authorization, of the 10 amendments on which there were rollcall votes, all were simple majorities; no 60-vote requirements. In 2004, with the 2005 Defense authorization, of the 30 amendments on which there were rollcall votes, all were simple majorities; no 60-vote requirements. In 2004, with the 2005 Defense authorization, of the 30 amendments on which there were rollcall votes, only 2 required an extraordinary majority of 60 votes, both requiring budget waivers. In 2005 when we considered the Defense authorization bill for 2006, for 25 amendments they were simple majority votes. None required 60 votes. In 2006, when considering the fiscal year 2007 Defense authorization bill, 15 amendments, only 2 required 60 votes. They related to the minimum wage. They required budget waivers. Those are the only 2.

Let me also correct the record. When the Senator from Arizona says we don't take up the war in Iraq on the Defense authorization bill, I would remind him that in the last Defense authorization bill, there were two specific amendments offered relative to the conduct of the war in Iraq—on this very bill last year: one by Senator LEVIN and Senator REED, another by Senator JOHN KERRY, both of which only required a majority vote.

I would say from the Senator from Arizona's point of view, there is scant evidence to support his position that No. 1, we never considered Iraq on Defense authorization bills—we just did last year; No. 2, we always require 60 votes when it comes to amendments on the bills. Six times in 7 years we did, each one because of a budget issue that is not involved in the Levin amendment.

Let me say a word about the other things said by the Senator from Arizona before yielding the floor. I respect the men and women in uniform. I have been to Iraq twice. I have visited with them. I have been to send-offs in my State of Illinois as National Guard units have been activated. I have been there to welcome them home. I carry on many conversations with the Illinois soldiers overseas. I keep in touch with their families. I respect them very much. But to say this is the first time we have heard from generals in Iraq that they just need another 6 months or another year, I think the Senator from Arizona knows better. We have been told this over and over again: When they stand up, we will stand down. Do you remember that one? How many years have we been hearing that? How many hundreds of millions of dollars have we put into Iraq for training Iraqi Army soldiers? Yet we are still there with a larger force today than there we were just a year ago.

So when my colleague argues that just a little more time is all they need, I hope he will understand the skepticism of the American people and many Members of the Senate. We have heard this before over and over again.

I also want to take issue with one point the Senator from Arizona said—and I am sure he didn't mean to mislead anyone. We are not talking about withdrawing the troops in 120 days, which is what has been said over and over again. The Levin-Reed amendment begins the withdrawal of troops in 120 days, completing it on April 1 of next year—transitioning by April 1 to a different force; not the combat force we know now caught in the midst of a civil war but a force with the specified mission of fighting al-Qaida and other terrorism, of helping transition the Iraqi Army to self-defense, and protecting our own men and women and our assets and security during this transition. Those things are all included in this bill. So this notion that somehow in a matter of 120 days all the troops will be gone, that isn't even envisioned in the Levin-Reed amendment.

So I would say to my friend from Arizona: Yes, I guess my patience has worn thin. I guess I have heard from too many generals such as those quoted by the Senator from Arizona that they just need a little more time. I have seen what time has cost us. It has cost us American lives. It has cost us serious, debilitating injuries. It has cost us a great deal in terms of our national treasure and resources. I think it is time for a change of policy, and so do the American people. They said that in the last election. They don't want us to dream up procedural obstacles to keep us from this decision. They want us to vote up or down to change the policy or keep the policy. That is what we were sent here to do.

I hope the Republican side of the aisle, as they initiate this filibuster, as they try to stop us from coming to a majority vote on the Levin-Reed amendment, understand that America sees that clearly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. MCCAIN. The Senator from Illinois—and this is growing a little wearisome, it really is. The fact is, 60 votes have been invoked by the minority time after time after time, whether it be a district judge or an appellate court judge, or most any other issue that is controversial. The Senator from Illinois knows that, and that is why it is very disappointing to see him using this kind of rhetoric when he is willing to have 60 votes be required for some judge but somehow feels—which they did invoke when they were in the minority—and yet feels that it is not appropriate to have 60 votes on an issue of this importance.

The Senator from Illinois talks about beginning the withdrawal in 120 days, beginning the withdrawal in 120 days. The day that is signed into law would be the day—would be the day, in the view of every military expert, that al-Qaida would sit back and wait until we left.

The Senator from Illinois continues to call it a civil war. There is sectarian violence. There is very little doubt in the minds—of course, perhaps the Senator from Illinois and others know more than literally every expert I know. It has become, in the words of General Petraeus, a center for al-Qaida and a central front in the war on terror, according to our leading generals.

Now, I resent a little bit this comment by the Senator from Illinois about he has heard the generals before. I heard the generals before, and I disagreed with the generals, and that is our right to do. But to denigrate their opinion I don't think is appropriate to people who spend their lives in the service of the military, defending this Nation. General Petraeus, it is my understanding, has been wounded three times in different wars fighting for this Nation. I think he deserves respect rather than being dismissed by saying: Well, I have heard the generals say that before. We should pay attention to the generals. We should have paid attention to the generals at other times in our history, including those who disagreed with the former Secretary of Defense, Secretary Rumsfeld.

Again, I repeat, since we seem to be going in a certain circularity, conditions in Iraq today are terrible, but they become way worse as the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, a career foreign service officer, recently told the New York Times. I am quoting from the Washington Post editorial of just a few days ago:

> The generals who have devised—

The generals whom the Senator from Illinois derides—

> The generals who have devised a new strategy believe they are making fitful progress in calming Baghdad, training the Iraqi Army, and encouraging anti-al-Qaida coalitions. Before Congress begins managing rotation schedules and ordering withdrawals, it should at least give those generals the months they ask for to see whether their strategy can offer some new hope.

Why do you think the Washington Post and literally most every national security expert feels that this ought to be given an opportunity, remembering that the last part of it has just been put in place a short time ago? Because the consequences of failure, as I have just quoted from many military experts, are a catastrophe.

General Lynch says:

> What the Iraqis are worried about is our leaving. And our answer is: We are staying, because my order from the Corps Commander is that we don't leave the battle space until we can hand over to the Iraqi security forces. Everybody wants things to happen overnight, and that is not going to happen.

So when the amendment of the Senator from Illinois and the Senator from Rhode Island and the Senator from Michigan is passed, then the word is spread and General Lynch can no longer say to the Iraqis we are staying, because we will be leaving.

General Odierno says:

> My assessment right now is, I need more time to understand how the current offensive targeting al-Qaida and Iraq terrorists is working and how it could lead to political progress in the months ahead.

Odierno said:

> I am seeing some progress now here in Iraq. We have really just started what the Iraqis term ''liberating'' them from al-Qaida. What I've got to determine is what do I need in order to continue that progress so that the political peace can take hold and Iraqi sources can hold this for the long term.

I want to point out to my colleagues that I am not guaranteeing success. I wish it had gone better. I think there are areas, particularly as far as the government is concerned, where dramatic improvement has to take place. But I do know the consequences of failure, and that view of setting a date for withdrawal is a clear recipe for a much larger conflict with much greater involvement in the region over time.

So when the Senator from Illinois and my friends on the other side of the aisle talk about how this won't be withdrawal if this is passed, I say: My friends, this is withdrawal. This is the message to those people who have to remain in the neighborhood: We are leaving and you are going to have to make adjustments to the neighborhood and the new big guys on the block.

Again, I wish we could take up this issue in September. I wish we could pass the necessary legislation to care for the men and women who are wounded. I wish we could pass the necessary legislation in order to take care of the needs of the men and women in the military. If we pass this bill this week—I tell my colleagues we are going to be going into the August recess. We will be coming back in September with probably a very contentious conference with the House. The chances right now of us getting final passage and the President's signature on this bill by the first of October is not good. So the sooner we get this bill off the floor and to the President, the better off we are going to be.

I certainly hope we will take into consideration the great needs that are existing in the military today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, tomorrow's vote in the Senate is not a vote on the Levin-Reed amendment. It is a vote on whether the Senate will allow us to vote on the Levin-Reed amendment. It is a vote on whether the Senate will break a filibuster so that the Senate can express its will, which I think is totally clear and reflects the will of the American people as expressed last November.

A change in course in Iraq is critical for our national security. If you think the present course is working, if you think we are making progress, as the President has said month after month, year after year, then presumably you are going to vote against the Levin-Reed amendment—if we can ever get to a vote on the Levin-Reed amendment. But if you believe that changing course is the only hope of success in Iraq, that forcing the political leaders of Iraq to accept responsibility for their nation and to work out the political settlements that could prevent this violence from continuing and lead to the ultimate success in Iraq, and if we can get to the Levin-Reed amendment and break the filibuster, then you will be voting yes.

Madam President, it has been more than 4 years since the United States invaded Iraq. Despite a military victory that toppled Saddam Hussein and routed his army, Iraq soon became victim to a Sunni insurgency, to Shiite militias bent on revenge, and became victim to an incursion of al-Qaida terrorists whose actions were aimed and are aimed at promoting an Iraqi civil war.

As the situation on the ground has shifted, so has President Bush's rationale for our involvement. He took us into Iraq to get rid of Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction. When no weapons of mass destruction were found, the President said we needed to create a democracy in Iraq. Now the President says we must stay on to fight al-Qaida.

The President had a pre-surge strategy, a surge strategy, and now he has offered a post-surge strategy. What has remained constant in all of these strategies is one thing: They all have an open-ended commitment of U.S. forces in the middle of Iraq's civil war.

That open-ended commitment of a Muslim country by the West has played right into the hands of al-Qaida. Indeed, the intelligence community is recently reported to have concluded that the years of our occupation of Iraq have seen a surge of al-Qaida in Iraq.

It has come at a staggering cost—the loss of more than 3,600 of America's best and bravest, seven times that many wounded, and a price of $10 billion each month. In spite of the heroic efforts of the U.S. service men and women, chaos and destruction have deepened in Iraq.

Yet, month after month, year after year, the President has touted progress in Iraq and called for patience. It has been a litany of delusion. Just listen to President Bush's repeated claims of progress.

In October of 2003, President Bush said:

> We are making progress about improving the lives of the people there in Iraq.

On September 25, 2004, the President said:

> We're making steady progress in implementing our five-step plan toward the goal we all want: completing the mission so that Iraq is stable and self-governing, and American troops can come home. . . .

On April 28, 2005, the President said:

> I believe we're really making progress in Iraq. . . .

On October 28, 2005, the President said:

> Iraq has made incredible political progress. . . .

On November 14, 2005, the President said:

> Iraqis are making inspiring progress toward building a democracy.

On May 25, 2006, the President said:

> We are making progress on all fronts.

On March 19, 2007, the President said:

> There has been good progress.

The exaggeration and the hype continues to this day. On June 28, a few weeks ago, the White House press release stated:

The Iraqi security forces are growing in number, becoming more capable, and coming closer to the day when they can assume responsibility for defending their own country.

But in the benchmark assessment report released last week we read:

There has been a slight reduction in units assessed as capable of independent operations since January 2007.

That is referring to Iraqi units. Even that turned out to be an exaggeration. Just 2 days later, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, told the press that the number of Iraqi Army brigades that were capable of independent operations had fallen from 10 to 6—quite a difference from a ''slight reduction.''

Madam President, one merely has to take note of recent incidents in Iraq as reported in our newspapers to know that things are not going well in Iraq and that the administration's assessments of progress have been consistently overblown through the years and continue to be overblown.

Consider the headline in USA Today on July 12: ''Iraqi police assist gunmen.'' The story described our Army investigation into a January attack in Karbala that killed five U.S. soldiers. Our investigation concluded that the Iraqi police who were supposed to be partners with American troops colluded with insurgents.

Then there was this story in the New York Times on July 14: ''U.S. Troops Battle Iraqi Police in East Baghdad.'' Those are the police who are supposed to be on our side trying to quell the violence in Baghdad, not attacking American troops.

On the all-important area of political benchmarks, consider this headline from the Financial Times of June 18: ''U.S. Military Frustrated at Lack of Iraqi Reconciliation.'' The story reports that General Petraeus said there has not been any ''real substantial achievements in terms of political reform in progress.''

Reuters reported on June 18 that Iraq was ranked the second most unstable country in the world behind Sudan in the 2007 Failed States Index, produced by Foreign Policy magazine. Failed state? Obviously, we don't want Iraq to be left as a failed state. It is failing. It is on a failing course. If we don't change that course, it is going to continue to descend into that failed status.

The administration's recent self-assessment of benchmarks that there is progress on 8 of the 18 benchmarks would have us believe that the cup in Iraq is half full rather than being half empty. Eight of eighteen—that sounds pretty good, like progress. But as a matter of fact, Iraq is a cup with a hole in its bottom. We keep pouring in our men and women and resources, and there is a hole in the bottom of that cup through which they go.

It is that Iraqi hole that Secretary Gates addressed on June 14 in Baghdad when he said the message he was delivering to the Iraqi people was that ''our troops are buying them time to pursue reconciliation and that, frankly, we are disappointed in the progress thus far.'' Secretary Gates was accurate in saying that ''our troops are buying [the Iraqis] time to pursue reconciliation.'' But what he left unsaid is that our troops and our Nation have paid, and continue to pay, far too high a price to give the Iraqis that opportunity, and the time is long past due for the Iraqi political leaders to accept responsibility for their own future.

Secretary Gates' statement that we are ''disappointed in the progress'' was surely an immense understatement. The American people are downright incensed at the failure of the Iraqi leaders.

Everybody agrees there is no military solution in Iraq and that the only way to end the violence is for the Iraqi political leaders to settle their differences. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki acknowledged that last November when he said—and these words should be seared, I believe, into the consciousness of each of us as we vote, if we are ever allowed to vote on the Levin-Reed amendment. Here is what he said:

The crisis is political, and the ones who can stop the cycle of . . . bloodletting of innocents are the [Iraqi] politicians.

Our service men and women are dying and being wounded while Iraqi leaders dawdle. The Iraqis themselves made commitments to share resources and power, amend their constitution, hold provincial elections, and take over responsibility for their own security in many more places than they have. They made the commitments last year in writing, but they have not kept them.

Secretary of State Rice recently confirmed in a letter to me that Iraqi leaders themselves, including their Presidency Council, had approved those benchmarks and the associated timeline. Secretary Rice wrote me:

We have confirmed with Iraqi President Talabani's chief of staff that the benchmarks were formally approved last fall by the Iraqi political committee on national security. This committee includes the presidency council, the President, and the two vice presidents, as well as the leaders of all the major political blocs in Iraq.

Well, the Iraqi leaders' record on meeting the political timelines, which they approved themselves with a timeline, is abysmal.

For example, they said they would approve provincial elections and set a date for those elections by October of 2006. That has not been accomplished. They didn't do what they promised they would do.

The Iraqi political leaders said they would approve the hydrocarbon law by October 2006. That was not done. That has not been accomplished. They didn't do what they said they would do. The Iraqi leaders said they would approve a debaathification law by November 2006. They didn't do what they promised to do. The Iraqi political leaders said the Constitutional Review Committee would complete its work by January 2007 and hold a constitutional amendment referendum by March of this year. They did not do what they promised they would do.

This is not us imposing our benchmarks on them, this is the Iraqi political leaders who adopted their benchmarks, and have not met them.

I ask unanimous consent that my letter to Secretary Rice and her response be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, while our troops have done everything, and more, of what has been asked of them, while they have risked their all and given their all, the Iraqi political leaders remain frozen by their own history, unwilling to take the political risks that only they can take.

If there is any hope of forcing the Iraqi political leaders to take responsibility for their own country and to keep the commitments they made to meet the political benchmarks that they set and to make the compromises that only they can make, it is to have a timetable to begin reducing American forces and to redeploy those forces to a more limited support mission instead of being everybody's target in the middle of a civil war.

We need to send a clear message to the Iraqi leaders that we will not be in Iraq indefinitely, that we will not be their security blanket forever. That is what the Levin-Reed amendment would do if we are allowed to vote on it. Our amendment would require the President to begin reducing the number of American troops in Iraq within 4 months of enactment.

It would require transitioning the mission of our remaining military forces to force protection, training of Iraqi security forces, and targeted counterterrorism missions. Our amendment would require that the transition to those limited missions be completed by April 30 of next year. Finally, and importantly, it would call for a comprehensive diplomatic, political, and economic strategy, including sustained engagement with Iraq's neighbors and seeking an appointment of an international mediator under the auspices of the U.N. Security Council in order to try to bring stability to Iraq.

Some have criticized our amendment because it contains a timeline for the completion of the transition to new missions. We received similar criticism in the past about the timeline for the commencement of the transition. Timelines need to be established as the only way to force a change of course in Iraq and to force the Iraqis to accept responsibility for their own future. It is human nature to put off difficult decisions. Passage of our amendment would serve as a forcing mechanism and serve to stimulate action by the Iraqi Government to reach a political settlement.

Delaying action until the receipt of the administration's plan in September would only delay the time when Congress applies the needed pressure. There is no indication that Iraqi political leaders will compromise without our pressure. Indeed, there is every indication they will not. As Secretary Gates stated in April:

> Debate in Congress . . . has been helpful in demonstrating to the Iraqis that American patience is limited . . . The debate itself and . . . the strong feelings expressed in the Congress about the timetable probably has had a positive effect in terms of communicating to the Iraqis that this is not an open-ended commitment.

There is no indication the administration is willing to change course. For years, they have deluded themselves and the Nation with claims of progress while Iraqis descended into sectarian violence and chaos. On July 4, President Bush repeated his call for patience which he has made so many times over the years.

After more than 4 years, over 3,600 U.S. deaths, seven times that many wounded, and expenditures of $10 billion a month that we are borrowing from the future to finance this war in Iraq, the President's pleas for patience not only have a hollow ring, it is exactly the wrong message to the Iraqi leaders. Our message should be we are out of patience, and the refusal of the Iraqi leaders to work out their political differences is something which is no longer acceptable.

Congress attempted to respond to last November's election with a vote that we made on April 26. We adopted a bill that did provide a timetable to begin the reduction of U.S. forces in Iraq, the beginning of a phased troop reduction, redeployment in no more than 120 days, and a transition to a more limited mission focusing on counterterrorism, force protection, and training and logistical support for the Iraqi Army. President Bush vetoed our bill shortly thereafter.

Senator MCCONNELL made a statement which was, I believe, very direct and very accurate, when he assessed not too long ago that ''the handwriting is on the wall that we are going in a different direction in the fall.'' That Presidential veto does not wash away the handwriting on the wall. It only makes the handwriting clearer and firmer that there is going to be a change of direction in Iraq.

So the question is: Why wait? Why not decide on a change of course now to save months of lost and wounded lives and huge additional expenditure of funds?

The clearer the handwriting on the wall is to the Iraqi political leaders and the quicker they read it and accept it, the greater the prospect for political settlement.

The clearer the handwriting on the wall is that the open-ended commitment of President Bush is over, not just rhetorically but in reality, the greater chance that an even wider civil war can be avoided.

There are some who acknowledge that a change of course is needed in Iraq, including U.S. troop reductions but who then say not now. But surely time is not working for us in Iraq. The sooner we shift strategy to force Iraqis to take responsibility, the better.

If we wish to improve the chance of a positive report on political progress in September, we need to put great pressure on Iraqi political leaders in July. We cannot and must not continue to have the lives of American servicemembers held hostage to Iraqi political intrigue and intransigence.

If we can get to the Levin-Reed amendment, if we can overcome the filibuster, and if we can adopt the Levin-Reed amendment which provides for the beginning of the reduction of our forces in Iraq in 120 days and transitioning to more limited missions, no more than 120 days after enactment, if we can adopt an amendment which says we will complete that transition by April 30, 2008, if we can adopt our amendment which provides for the appointment of an international mediator under U.N. auspices, we believe we will have passed the best chance of success in Iraq, and we will have adopted the only course of action which has a chance of pressuring the Iraqi leaders to do what only they can do.

The clock is ticking. We are losing more American lives and more American resources every day we delay. The time has come to set deadlines, to reduce our forces in Iraq, to transition to the new limited missions, and to embark on a comprehensive, diplomatic, political, and economic strategy to bring stability to Iraq.

I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, May 9, 2007.

Hon. CONDOLEEZZA RICE,
Secretary of State,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SECRETARY: I am writing in connection with your letter of January 20, 2007 in which you advised me regarding a set of benchmarks that the Government of Iraq has set for itself.

You wrote that ''Iraq's Policy Committee on National Security agreed upon a set of political, security, and economic benchmarks and an associated timeline in September 2006. These were reaffirmed by the Presidency Council on October 16, 2006, and referenced by the Iraq Study Group; the relevant document (enclosed) was posted at that time on the President of Iraq's website.''

Yesterday, I met with Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Prime Minister Maliki's national security adviser. During the course of our meeting, Dr. Rubaie stated that the Presidency Council never reaffirmed the benchmarks. He was adamant on this point even after I showed him the statement in your letter.

This is an important point as the Presidency Council, whose three members, President Jalal Talabani (Kurd), Deputy President 'Adil 'Abd al-Mahdi (Shia Muslim) and Deputy President Tariq al-Hashimi (Sunni Muslim), are elected by the Council of Representatives and represent the three major ethnic groups of the country.

Earlier today, State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack stated ''These are the benchmarks that they've laid out for themselves. We didn't come up with them. They came up with them. And they need to be seen in the eyes of the Iraqi people as delivering for the Iraqi people.''

It seems to me that it would make a difference if the benchmarks and associated timeline were only approved by an advisory group as compared to the Presidency Council.

Accordingly, please confirm that the benchmarks and associated timeline, which you attached to your January 30, 2007 letter, were reaffirmed by the Presidency Council after being agreed upon by the Policy Committee on National Security, as stated in your letter.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

CARL LEVIN,
Chairman.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2007.

Hon. CARL LEVIN,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services,
U.S. Senate.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your letter inquiring about the benchmarks that the Government of Iraq set for itself last fall.

As you mentioned, I sent to you a letter in January in which I noted that Iraq's Political Committee on National Security agreed upon a set of benchmarks and an associated timeline, which were reaffirmed by the Iraqi Presidency Council in October 2006.

We have confirmed with Iraqi President Talabani's Chief of Staff that the benchmarks were formally approved last fall by the Iraqi Political Committee on National Security. This committee includes the Presidency Council—the President and the two Vice Presidents—as well as the leaders of all the major political blocs in Iraq. The Iraqi Presidency Council then posted the benchmarks on its website for several months.

Thank you for your interest in this issue. Please feel free to contact us on this or any matter of concern to you.

Sincerely,

CONDOLEEZZA RICE.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, yesterday a man whom I had the opportunity of meeting and knowing a little bit, British Army Lieutenant General Jim Lamb—General Lamb is the Deputy Commander of Multinational Forces Iraq and senior British military representative in Iraq—was asked by Jamie McIntyre of CNN about how ''the growing sentiment in our Congress to bring U.S. troops home sooner'' affected the mood of his troops deployed in Iraq, meaning the British troops. Lieutenant General Lamb responded that those troops find it ''a touch difficult.'' I think that is a very interesting phrase, ''a touch difficult,'' because while it is so clear to them that we are making progress, it is not reflected by those who are not in the fight but are sitting back and making judgment upon what they, the troops, can see with absolute clarity.

Lieutenant General Lamb noted that those making such judgments and not taking note of the progress ''are not going out every day in a humvee.'' Moreover, he further noted that the progress the troops see is seldom reported. They see provincial counselors,

they see water going to people who didn't have it before, they see electricity coming online, they see stability to the networks. They see all this stuff that no one portrays.

I say to my friend from Michigan and the Senator from Illinois and others, I hope they pay a little attention to General Lamb's statement or reject it out of hand, of course, as apparently is being done.

I have to repeat, General Lamb responded that his troops find it ''a touch difficult.'' While it is so clear to them we are making progress, it is not reflected by those who are not in the fight but are sitting back and making judgment upon what they, the troops, can see with absolute clarity.

I don't think I have to editorialize anymore on General Lamb's, I think, totally accurate statements.

The New York Post reported on July 10 an interview with General Petraeus. He is asked by Ralph Peters, a person for whom I have enormous respect:

> The current military operations in Iraq appear comprehensive and tenacious, part of a long-term, integrated plan. What can we realistically expect to achieve?
>
> Petraeus: Our primary goal is to work with our Iraqi counterparts to improve security for the Iraqi people. This is intended to give the Iraqi leaders the time to resolve the tough political issues they face and to pursue internal reconciliation.

He goes on to say:

> As to reasonable expectations, we can expect a reduction in sectarian deaths and the gradual spread of Iraqi government authority. The level of sectarian deaths in Baghdad in June was the lowest in about a year. Nevertheless, the extremists still have been able to carry out car bomb and other attacks.
>
> Wherever we operate, we try to reconnect Iraqi ministries and local governments to meet the needs of the people. Finally, we provide opportunities for Iraqis to use their local knowledge to help root out al Qaeda. Successful operations of this nature have played out in recent months in Ramadi, Hit and Baquba. In each case, Iraqis turned against al Qaeda and sided with the Coalition.

Question:

> Now that the surge is fully in place, what's your sense of the positives and negatives thus far? If you could have more of any one item, what would it be? Troops? Time? Iraqi unity?

General Petraeus's answer:

> I can think of few commanders in history who wouldn't have wanted more troops, more time or more unity among their partners; however, if I could only have one at this point in Iraq, it would be more time.

I repeat, General Petraeus said:

> . . . if I could only have one at this point in Iraq, it would be more time. This is an exceedingly tough endeavor that faces countless challenges.

So what does the Levin-Reed amendment do? Deny General Petraeus exactly that. As Senator LEVIN points out in his statement, the announced withdrawal would force the Iraqi Government to act and, therefore, then we would see progress. What if, I say to my colleagues who support this amendment, what if instead the situation deteriorates into a chaotic situation, then what do we do? Then what do we do if the situation gets worse? Do we come back in? Do we sit on the sidelines and watch another genocide? What if, I say to my colleague who often asks me what is plan B, the surge doesn't work? What is plan B if the withdrawal doesn't work?

I don't think that most people would believe that an international mediator is exactly a solution that is viable.

I wish to talk a minute about the region. Finally, after our stunning military victory and shock and awe and the invasion side of the conflict was over, America was in pretty good shape in the region. The Syrians were trying to be cooperative. There were efforts on the part of the Iranians to join with us in efforts to bring about an end to terrorism in the region. Then we began to fail, and that failure has, obviously, been chronicled in many books. I recommend to my colleagues the book ''Fiasco'' or ''Cobra II'' or a number of other books that have been written that describe the failed Rumsfeld strategy. We paid a very heavy price for it. All of us know that. It has been the sacrifice of our most precious asset.

What has happened since? We find the Syrians continuing to intervene in northern Lebanon. We find the Syrians, according to many experts, transporting suicide bombers through the airport in Damascus into Iraq. We find the Iranians not only orchestrating attacks and providing intelligence and even money and funding, in some cases, but there is clear and compelling evidence that the IEDs, the most lethal IEDs are exported from Iran into Iraq, those that have the lethality even of going through the armor of a tank. We find the Iranians more aggressive in the region with Iranian support for Hezbollah and Hamas. The Syrians continue to try to unsettle the Government of Lebanon, and the Government of Lebanon is having great difficulties.

There is a U.N. Security Council resolution that calls for the disarmament of Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. There has been no effort whatsoever to achieve the goals set forth in that U.N. Security Council resolution. In fact, there is strong evidence that Hezbollah in southern Lebanon is being resupplied with the rockets they expended in their latest attack on Israel which provoked an attack on Israel. We find the Saudis becoming more and more uneasy. We once had a report—that fortunately turned out to be false—that the Turks had crossed over into the Kurdish areas because of Kurdish insurgents who are operating out of the Turkish areas, at least according to the Turks. So we have seen, because of our failure in Iraq, more strife, more conflict, and more threats to the State of Israel.

Meanwhile, the Iranians continue on the path to develop nuclear weapons. A great fear of many of us is not a nuclear weapon aimed at Israel from Iran. One of our great fears is a nuclear weapon passed to a terrorist organization by the Iranian Government, which has stated through its President and its policies their dedication to the extinction of the State of Israel. I could argue that the State of Israel is probably in more jeopardy from a national security standpoint than at any time in its history, since that very young nation achieved its independence.

So what happens in the region when we adopt the Levin-Reed resolution, and the signal is sent throughout the region ''don't worry, the Americans are leaving.'' I think the consequences are fairly obvious. So we are not just talking about Iraq, as serious and consequential as that situation is. We are talking about the region. It is hard for me to believe the Sunnis would not intervene to protect Sunnis if there is a bloodletting in Baghdad, where 2 million Sunni reside and 4 million Shia. But according to the premise of the Levin-Reed amendment, this will force the Iraqi Government to act and to control their own destiny.

My question is: What do we do if they can't? What do we do if they can't?

Some of my colleagues have talked about this ''gradual withdrawal.'' A gradual withdrawal. I think most military experts would tell you that the most difficult operation in military tactics and strategy is a ''gradual withdrawal.'' It is fraught with difficulty. When an army is defeated, and an army tries to come home, it is the most difficult of all military operations.

So I think that as we discuss this specific amendment and the issue of whether we stay or go in Iraq, whether we allow the new strategy of General Petraeus and the Joint Chiefs of Staff a chance to succeed, which calls for a surge in Iraq, while we debate this, I don't think we should ignore the larger implications for the region. I believe, and I cannot absolutely predict the future, but a failure in Iraq, according to most experts, would lead to a chaotic and unsettled situation in the region.

So I would at least ask for my colleagues' consideration of an article by Stephen Biddle in the Washington Post on July 11, entitled ''Iraq: Go Deep or Get Out.'' I think perhaps we ought to start looking at this situation from that respect. Mr. Biddle, in his piece, says:

> The result has been a search for some kind of politically moderate ''Plan B'' that would split the difference between surge and withdrawal.

I think that adequately describes the Reed-Levin amendment.

> The problem is that these politics do not fit the military reality of Iraq. Many would like to reduce the U.S. commitment to something like half of today's troop presence there. But it is much harder to find a mission for the remaining 60,000 to 80,000 soldiers that makes any sense militarily.
>
> Perhaps the most popular centrist option today is drawn from the Baker-Hamilton commission recommendations of last December. This would withdraw U.S. combat brigades, shift the American mission from one of training and supporting the Iraqi security forces, and cut total U.S. troop levels in the

country by about half. This idea is at the heart of the proposed legislative effort that Domenici threw his support behind last week, and support is growing on both sides of the aisle on Capitol Hill.

The politics make sense, but the compromise leaves us with an untenable military mission. Without a major U.S. combat effort to keep the violence down, the American training effort would face challenges even bigger than those our troops are confronting today. An ineffective training effort would leave tens of thousands of American trainers, advisers, and supporting troops exposed to that violence in the meantime. The net result is likely to be continued U.S. casualties with little positive effect on Iraq's ongoing civil war.

It is unrealistic to expect that we can pull back to some safe yet productive mission of training but not fighting—this would be neither safe nor productive.

So, Madam President, I think we ought to look at what we are discussing here not only from the standpoint of Iraq but the implications for our presence in the region. And I will say something that is very seldom stated on the floor of the Senate: as long as we are dependent on oil in the region, our greater national security interests are at stake in what happens with the outcome of Iraq. The possibility of success in Iraq, of seeing the world's third largest oil reserves being modernized and used, and those revenues used for the betterment of the American people, also presents a goal that I think is worth striving for.

I would like to again return to the fact that I am deeply disappointed in the Maliki government. Their failure to act unhinges the very important aspect of the military, political, social, and economic aspects of any successful counterinsurgency operation. But I also believe that nothing would embolden the Iranians more, nothing would embolden the Syrians more, nothing would frighten the Jordanians and the Saudis more, not to mention the Egyptians, than the passage of legislation which would require the withdrawal of the United States.

So I urge my colleagues not only to look at how this legislation and this debate affects America vis-a-vis Iraq but affects our western and national interests and values in the entire Middle East.

Madam President, I note the patience of my friend from Rhode Island, who is a thoughtful and valued member of the Armed Services Committee whose friendship I appreciate a great deal.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for the kind words. And one of my first reactions was a bit of confusion. He referenced General Lamb, the British officer in Baghdad, expressing chagrin at the proposals to reduce the troop strength of the American forces. He must have been beside himself last February when Prime Minister Blair announced the reduction of British forces. In fact, Prime Minister Blair stated at that time that 7,100 troops would be drawn down to approximately 5,500. That is down from a level of 40,000.

So at the time that the British are withdrawing troops, we are trying to surge troops. I think the general's peak or discomfort is somewhat misplaced with the United States. I think it should more properly be directed to Prime Minister Blair.

But let me get on with issues that I want to address, and that is to try to clarify from my perspective some of the concepts and terms that have been talked about. One is a repeated reference to General Petraeus's plan. The President makes it, and my colleagues make it. This is the President's plan. General Petraeus was asked specifically in his confirmation hearing what role he played, and here was his answer.

I met with the Secretary of Defense a couple days after he took office and before he left for his first trip to Iraq, and we discussed the situation there during that meeting. We subsequently talked after his trip. I also talked to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff several times in this period, noting that a population and security emphasis in Baghdad in particular was necessary to help the Iraqis gain the time and space for tough decisions.

As the strategy was refined, I talked on several occasions to General Odierno. I relayed my support for those levels that General Odierno recommended to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I also supported the additional emphasis in the advisory effort.

This is not a precise quote, but paraphrases his remarks. General Petraeus is not the author of this plan. He, like many officers, participated, was asked questions; he had great experience. He was the head and led the 101st Air Mobile Division in Iraq and was head of our training effort. But this is not his plan.

Now, he has accepted this plan. He did that publicly. But this is the President's plan. And at the heart of the President's plan is the statement he made on January 10 when he announced it.

I have made it clear to the prime minister and Iraq's other leaders that America's commitment is not open-ended. If the Iraqi government does not follow through on its promises, it will lose the support of the American people and lose the support of the Iraqi people. Now is the time to act. The prime minister understands this.

Well, apparently, the prime minister did not understand, because in the intervening months, exactly what the President feared has happened. There has been no adequate political progress in Iraq. That is key rationale for the increased forces in Iraq. And without this political decisiveness on the part of the Iraqis, our military efforts will not be decisive. And what has happened because of this failure to act is precisely as the President suggested? The American people have increasingly become critical of the policy in Iraq. Their support is eroding, and similarly the Iraqi people.

So you have a situation now where the logic and the premise for the surge, for the troop levels we are maintaining in Iraq, was the fact there would be political progress. Since January, to date there has not been political progress. I daresay there is very few, if any, of my colleagues that will argue that between now and September 15 we will see remarkable progress by the Iraqi Government. Indeed, it is suspected, confirmed practically, that the Iraqi Assembly will adjourn in August for the month. So the reality is that on these critical issues of political will and decisiveness and political progress, we will know nothing in September that we do not know now.

Given the incredibly complicated political system, the incredibly complicated institutional challenges facing the Iraqi Government, the notion that we will know more even at the end of this year or the beginning of next year is doubtful. Without this political progress, all our military efforts will not produce success. That is one reason I think we have to begin to change course. We have to begin to adjust our effort to protect our self-interests and our interests in the region, but no longer be the broker, if you will, for political progress in Iraq that does not materialize.

My colleagues have been on the Senate floor and said time and time again that there have been deadlines imposed, in many cases by the Iraqis themselves, that have not been met. The latest report, just a few days ago, suggested these political benchmarks have not been issued. Without that, our efforts and the brave sacrifice of our soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors, and every man and woman who is out there, are not producing the results we want and need. So we have to look again at this strategy.

But there is another factor, too, that I think is important to note. I was just in Iraq—as so many of my colleagues have traveled there, I have also—and I spoke with General Petraeus directly. He gave me every indication that he was not waiting for September; that he had been able to make an assessment over the several months he has been in command, and he is prepared to make a recommendation—unless I misunderstood him—before the end of August.

Now, he might be overruled by the White House in Washington, but he has a pretty good sense of what is happening on the ground, and we should have that same sense in the Congress.

The other factor that seems so critical when it is put next to the issue of no apparent progress by Iraqi political leaders is the fact that by April of next year, April 2008, our military forces will not be able to generate 160,000 troops on the ground in Iraq. The surge will come to an end regardless of what happens on the ground. Unless, of course, the President is prepared to

make Draconian personnel changes, extend deployments to 18 months or even longer, calling up Reserve and National Guard units that are not scheduled to be called up, continuing to rely upon the stop-loss practice, where individuals who are eligible to leave the service after honorable service are denied the opportunity to leave and in many cases are forced to deploy; picking reservists and people who are in the individual Ready Reserve, those are individuals who served their full active commitment, they have left, many of them have gone on with their lives and suddenly they are called up and told get back in uniform, you are going overseas.

Without such draconian decisions, then by next April we will not be able to field 160,000 troops in Iraq as we are doing today. So the reality is this policy will change. The question is, will it change now or then and will it change in a way that strengthens the national security of the United States? Also, will it change in a way it will gain the support of the American people?

One of the factors in a counterinsurgency is the fact that you need popular support. That is not something that is a special thing to have or a nice thing to have, it is essential to the strategy. We are losing—the President is losing—popular support with respect to these operations. Without that support, we will not be able to maintain our presence in Iraq.

We are seeing already Americans across the political divide, across the geographical divide, demanding that this Congress act. They have, frankly, little confidence in the President's ability, after all these years, to get it right. That is one of the major reasons we are here today debating, and we will be tonight debating, because the American people are looking for a new direction in Iraq.

The other factor that I think should be mentioned is that, while we have pursued a strategy of increasing our forces, our adversaries—and they are multiple in a complicated theater of operations—have reacted. First of all, they have taken the battle, if you will, the battle we tried to orchestrate in Baghdad, and they have spread it around the country. They have moved where there are fewer troops. This has caused us to spread our operations around. The surge, if you will, the additional approximately 30,000 troops, were initially intended to go into Baghdad.

If you, as I did, listened closely to General Petraeus at his confirmation hearing, if you listened to the President in his January 10 speech, the concept was Baghdad was going to be locked down. It was going to be saturated with American and Iraqi forces. That has not happened because our tactical leaders have determined they must get out of Baghdad, they must go ahead and pursue some of these elements outside of Baghdad, and our adversaries have decided they would rather move on than take us in a head-to-head fight.

Time, regretfully, is always on the side of the insurgent. If they can survive a day, then that is a day that is in their favor. As a result, even with these additional 30,000 troops, there is a question of whether they are an adequate number to take over this population protection mission the President has announced. The population of Iraq is significant. That is another factor I think we have to consider when we look at the adequacy of even the President's proposal today.

The Levin-Reed proposal talks about doing what is not only necessary but frankly inevitable. We have to begin to redeploy our forces. We have to begin to reduce our forces. We cannot sustain this effort because of the structure of our military forces.

The President had an opportunity several years ago, in the wake of our success in Afghanistan and in the wake of the operations in Iraq, to dramatically increase the size of the Army and the Marine Corps. Senator HAGEL and I came to the floor and we proposed an amendment, in 2003, to do that. This was opposed by the administration because, if you recall, back then this Iraq operation was basically all but over and they were getting out.

Now it is very difficult to increase the size of the military forces. The Army has missed, for the last 2 months, its recruiting objectives. But even if we stayed on track recruiting, we are still in a situation where we cannot grow the Army fast enough, the Marine Corps fast enough, to maintain indefinitely these forces in Iraq. So the strategy must change. If the strategy is not only not supported by our end strength, it certainly must change in the light of the American people.

I think the President made a significant mistake last January. After an election that sent a very strong signal all across this country that the American people wanted change, after the report of the Iraq Study Group, wise men and women on both sides of the aisle, with no particular special interest they were trying to protect or advance—they were true patriots coming forward to give their best advice—suggested that our strategy should be remarkably similar to what we are talking about today: the redeployment of the American forces; switching missions to training, force protection, counterterrorism; engaging in robust diplomatic activity in the region.

Those recommendations were cast aside by the President. At that point, if not earlier, the American public began to seriously question the direction of his policy in Iraq. Without public support, you cannot conduct military operations effectively or for any length of time.

So we face two realities in the United States. Ultimately, the inability to generate this force structure indefinitely and the fact that the American people are growing increasingly intolerant of our operations in Iraq—not our forces there, not those magnificent men and women who are fighting and sadly dying each day but our presence there and the lack each day, in their minds, of any real progress and the documented lack of political progress. It was documented a few days ago on the part of the Iraqi Government.

So we have to change. The question then is what is the best way to do it? We can debate about this. But certainly this amendment, offered by myself and Senator LEVIN, represents a change. Not a hortatory request for further assessment, not a discussion of possibilities or reference to another study group but a plan of change.

It begins by initiating a reduction of our forces 120 days after passage. That probably will be sometime toward the end of this year, given the nature of the legislative process. It doesn't specify any specific level of reductions. That is the President as Commander's prerogative. It doesn't specify a particular timetable when they can leave, who should go first. Again, that is his prerogative. But what it does suggest and, in fact, requires is that by April of next year, that we have transitioned to three missions—again, missions that were supported significantly by the Iraq Study Group: Force protection—we always have to protect our forces and facilities in the field; counterterrorism, because we never want to give up not only the option but the obligation to strike at terrorist cells wherever they may be, particularly in Iraq; and third, the continued training of the Iraqi security forces.

These I think are missions that are not only critical but they advance our national security interests. Again, this fight against terror cannot be given up. We have to continue it. To the extent that we can create effective Iraqi security forces, mitigates against the real concerns that have been expressed on this floor of the aftermath of what I think is almost an inevitable reduction in our presence. We have to be concerned about that.

One of the vexing things, though, about training the Iraqi security forces, is it is relatively easy to teach map reading and squad drills. It is relatively easy to teach calling for artillery fire. What is hard to teach, because you really can't teach it, is the political reliability, with a small ''p,'' the dedication to the country, the situation in which professional officers are truly professional. That is one of the nagging doubts that everyone has about the Iraqi security forces, particularly the Iraqi police, and to a less degree the Iraqi Army. There are many factors there, too, but we still have to, I think, press forward and try to train these forces.

Our amendment represents the only real possibility of change today, of all those that might be discussed on the floor. It represents not a precipitous withdrawal. It is a phased reduction to missions that are important and are

well within the capacity, I believe, of our military forces to sustain over time. They serve, I think, the much broader interests of the United States.

All of this, of course, has to be complemented by robust political activity, diplomatic activity in Iraq and around the region, something the President has been woefully lacking in his pursuit of, over the many months we have been engaged. We have to make the case—it is difficult to make, but we have to make the case to the neighbors, particularly, that an Iraq that becomes this caldron of instability and chaos that some of my colleagues fear—and, frankly, that we have to at least anticipate, in terms of our diplomacy and some of our military preparation—that this situation would be detrimental to them as much, if not more, than to us.

A chaotic, turbulent, anarchy on the border of any country spells serious problems for that country. That case should begin to be made immediately, not only by our diplomats but by the international community.

We suggest, also, we have to try again to involve others in this effort; not just the United States and Great Britain but others, the international actors. They, too, I think have an interest in a stable region, a stable Iraq.

It has been discussed on this floor that al-Qaida is sitting back and hoping we leave. It is an interesting concept because there is some contradictory evidence. Ayman Zawahiri, who is the second in command of al-Qaida, was quoted recently as suggesting that our departure would actually be something that would cause them some concern. Not because they don't wish us ill, they certainly do. Not because today they don't continue to try to attack us. But because they believe our presence in Iraq, in his words as translated, is a ''historic trap,'' that we are trapped there and that they can use their forces there—not the al-Qaida elements but all the sectarian groups, some of them operating against us because we are there—they can use these forces to attack our troops, diminish our presence, and effectively continue to apply pressure on us.

I think there is a suggestion there that our departure might, in fact, help us in our overall strategy. It certainly will help us to counteract the image which the propagandists, the Zawahiris of the world present, that the United States is committed to destroying the Muslim community by imperialistically invading holy territory. We are in a battle of ideas ultimately, and we are not doing a very good job because what they are able to show throughout the entire Islamic world is our forces in Iraq and our forces in Afghanistan but particularly in Iraq and try to validate their claim, their propaganda, that is why they exist, to resist us.

In the course of our strategy going forward, one should think at least about the efficacy of our presence there, not in terms of a bulwark of security in Iraq but as a way that we, in fact, are playing into the hands of many of these Iraqi terrorists, these international terrorists.

One of the other aspects we face as a reality on the ground is the complex situation in Iraq. Too often I think the President and others try to simplify this as this battle for Iraq is the central front in our battle against al-Qaida. I would argue the central front in our battle against al-Qaida is somewhere in Pakistan. That is where bin Laden is, where Zarqawi is, that is where it is reported that hundreds of Iraqis and others, Europeans, Chechens, are training to be jihadist terrorists across the globe. But regardless of where the central front is, the issue I think we have to recognize and grasp is that our presence in Iraq is something we cannot sustain indefinitely.

We have to focus, I think, on the other threats, focus more diligently on these other threats. Now, we have a situation in Iraq, a complicated situation of Kurds, Shia, and Sunni, together with criminals, together with terrorist elements, al-Qaida. Too often, as I said, we try to make the point it is just about al-Qaida.

We have made progress in Anbar Province because in that Sunni region, the Sunni tribal leaders have united against al-Qaida. But that does not define the most decisive factor in Iraq, and that is the conflict between the Sunni community and the Shia community; a community on one hand, the Sunnis, who feel profound entitlement, and on the other hand, the Shia, who feel a profound sense of paranoia.

I think we have to ask ourselves seriously, will that profound conflict between the two communities be resolved in 30 days, on September 15; will it be resolved in a week; more than that; October 1; will it be resolved 6 months from now?

It has lasted for hundreds and hundreds of years. It is the fuel that is generating the conflict we see in Iraq today. Without the political steps of the Iraqi Government leaders at least to attempt to deal with this issue, our presence will not deal with—I think in the short term—the solution.

Senator LEVIN and I have proposed what I believe is the most practical, feasible, realistic policy we can pursue today in Iraq; indeed, as I suggest, a policy which perhaps not in the same terms but in the same substance will inevitably be the policy of this country. I hope today, though, we can take decisive action to move to our bill, avoid a filibuster, to vote up or down and move forward with a new direction for Iraq, a new direction for our country.

I note the presence of the senior Senator from West Virginia.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, as the Senate turns its attention to the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, every Member of this body is focused on the security of our Nation and the safety of our troops in Iraq. Senators Levin and McCain, along with the other members of the Armed Services Committee, have worked hard, very hard, to put together a bipartisan bill that provides our troops with the resources they need and sets priorities for defense spending for the year ahead.

This is a strong bill. I was proud to support it in committee. But it is incomplete—incomplete because we cannot possibly claim to have truly provided for our Nation's security until we have addressed the situation in Iraq.

It is now more than 4 years since President Bush declared the mission in Iraq has been accomplished. Since ''mission accomplished,'' more than 3,400 U.S. soldiers have died, died in Iraq. A sectarian civil war is now deeply entrenched, deeply entrenched and raging.

The political compromises that for years we have been promised by the Iraqis seem to be more distant than ever. Civilians are dying in ever greater numbers, and every day more American troops are hurled into the crossfire.

It is time, yes, far past time, for the Congress—that is us—to have a real debate about this war and about where our national security interests ultimately lie. We must start by sunsetting the outdated and open-ended 2002 authorization to use force in Iraq and requiring the President to request a new authorization that outlines the new mission which our troops are being asked to perform.

The amendment Senator CLINTON and I are offering does exactly that. It will end the 2002 authorization on its 5-year anniversary, October 11, 2007. That authorization which was passed to confront the threat that we were told faced us from the government of Saddam Hussein is no longer relevant. Our troops have toppled the dictator. The Iraqis have voted in a new government. No weapons of mass destruction have been found.

Meanwhile, American soldiers continue to die, die in the crossfire of another country's civil war, while the President fails to clearly articulate our mission, our strategy or our goals for continuing our occupation of Iraq. He must clearly explain his vision, his vision to an increasingly skeptical public, the American people, those people out yonder, the American people.

We were told this year would mark a turning point, a new direction in this war with a new strategy intended to give Iraq's political leaders breathing room in order to forge a political consensus. Unfortunately, that is not the way events have unfolded. Despite the addition of more than 20,000 American troops into Baghdad, civilian deaths have actually increased as the insurgents have engaged in a surge of their own—a surge of their own—far from creating breathing room for peace.

The President's current course appears to be pumping oxygen into the fire of sectarian violence. The decision to go to war—the decision to go to war—to send our sons and daughters into the line of fire, to ask them to kill and be killed on our behalf, is the weightiest decision that a Member of Congress can ever, ever, ever make.

It is wrong, wrong I say, it is wrong for Congress to continue to fail to reassess that outdated authority without a real debate about where the occupation of Iraq is headed. The authorization that Congress passed in 2002 to give the President authority to go to war in Iraq was rushed through here 3 weeks before Congressional elections—yes, rushed through.

It was passed in the shadow of warnings of mushroom clouds and the not-so-subtle implication that anyone who voted against the war could not be trusted with matters of national security.

It was a hasty and unconstitutional abdication of Congress's authority in matters of war. It is time to bring that authorization to a close—yes—and have an honest debate about the way forward. We do our troops a disservice if we do not take a fresh look, and the President should welcome the opportunity to solicit our renewed support for his policy. We must think of our national interest and think again—yes—of our brave troops. We must put politics aside.

At a recent Senate hearing, I asked Defense Secretary Gates if the 2002 authorization still applies to Iraq. His response, may I say, was surprisingly candid:

> I don't know.

I believe the answer to that question is clear and that it is time for the President to make the case to the Congress of the United States and to the American people of the United States for the U.S. military's changed mission in Iraq. Our country will benefit from the debate.

This amendment puts the ball right back in the President's court, requiring him, the President, to request a new authorization for the new mission that challenges our military. The White House has repeatedly asserted that General Petraeus needs until September to assess the progress of the security escalation in Iraq. This amendment gives him that time. But this amendment also ensures that Congress and the people will have the opportunity to examine that progress to determine our course in Iraq. It is a simple, commonsense approach that reestablishes the congressional authority decreed by the Constitution of the United States. It also respects the President's role as the Commander in Chief.

It is important to emphasize to all of my colleagues that supporting my amendment does not preclude voting for any other legislative options. This amendment addresses the legal foundation for this horrible war. We are a nation of laws, not of men. My amendment simply states the obvious truth, that the facts on the ground do not match the open-ended authorization that is still in force. Any Senator wishing to vote for legislation mandating a withdrawal date or to restrict the war funding or to implement the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group should also support the Byrd-Clinton amendment.

As the President himself said earlier this year:

> The fight we are in is not the fight that we entered.

I couldn't agree more. This is not the fight Congress authorized. I urge this body to schedule a vote on the Byrd-Clinton amendment, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I understand our staffs have reached a point where we were able to clear something like 26 amendments on this bill but that there is one last hurdle on the Republican side. I am wondering whether my good friend from Arizona feels there may be a possibility that we can jump over that hurdle in the next couple hours.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to engage in a short colloquy with my colleague from Michigan, the distinguished chairman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. McCAIN. I say to my colleague that we have one individual, and we do have some 26 amendments that I think are cleared that we could get out of the way. I am working on that right now. I thank my colleague and most of all the staffs for their close cooperation.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank my friend.

I understand the Senator from Nebraska wants the floor, and I yield the floor.

Mr. McCAIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to support the Levin-Reed amendment. As we know, Iraq is the most important issue facing our country today. The core challenge in Iraq is the cycle of violence, despair, and retribution that is tearing Iraq apart and threatening wider regional instability. There is no significant progress in Iraq. By any measurement, the situation in Iraq is getting worse as each week passes. Prime Minister al-Maliki's Government is essentially paralyzed and dysfunctional, in part by boycotts and sectarian rivalries and an intense sectarian war.

The Interior Ministry in Iraq, which controls Iraq's police forces, is still a disaster and does not function as a national ministry. Horrific violence in Iraq is spreading beyond Baghdad. Yesterday, car bombs and attacks in Kirkuk and Diyala Province killed more than 100 and injured almost 200 Iraqis. Kirkuk is an area of Iraq in the northern part, Kurdistan, that has been considered by this administration as one of the most secure areas of Iraq. Recent events in Kurdistan over the last few months have shown otherwise. Increasingly, regions that were previously seen as relatively stable and secure, such as the Kurdish area, are now being engulfed by violence. The southern four provinces in Iraq near Basra, which contains most of Iraq's oil and Iraq's only port and outlet to the sea, are out of control. Shiite militias control the southern four provinces of Iraq, including the most significant oil reserves in Iraq's one outlet to the sea. Shiite militias and criminal gangs control these provinces and today even demand tribute, and we pay it. The Iraqi Government pays tribute to Shia militias to use Iraq's primary port. The last remaining pipeline into Baghdad has been blown up, crippling Baghdad's access to oil, and there are no operating refineries in Baghdad. Hence, the product that comes to Baghdad today is trucked in from Kuwait. This is the nation that has the third largest oil reserves in the world. The green zone is being attacked daily.

Last week, 9 people were killed, including Americans, and over 30 wounded inside the green zone. These daily attacks on the green zone by mortar fire, rocket fire increase.

I have listened today to some of my colleagues argue that the surge strategy—the surge strategy—has only just begun; why don't we give it a chance to work; we are at a very early stage; we must give the President more time.

Let me remind our colleagues it has been more than 6 months since the President of the United States announced to the Nation on January 10 the decision to send tens of thousands of additional U.S. troops into Iraq. That was the beginning of the surge, not now. It has been more than 5 months since these additional U.S. troops began arriving in Iraq in early February. We have had months to judge the situation in Iraq. Only last week, the President reported to Congress that there has been no progress—no progress—on any of the political benchmarks in Iraq. The violence that is tearing Iraq apart has intensified and spread over the last 6 months. The current strategy is failing, and the so-called surge that some of my colleagues refuse to recognize that began almost 6 months ago has cost 532 American men and women their lives since that began. We have lost more than 3,600 Americans who have died and over 26,000 wounded over the last 4½ years.

We must change our policy in Iraq. Central to our new strategy must be diplomacy, regional engagement, and the

involvement of the international community, all of these coming together within the framework of a new policy, using all of the instruments of power to help achieve Iraqi political accommodation—political accommodation. We are captive to a cycle of violence. We cannot break out of the cycle of violence. More troops will not do that. We have put burdens on our troops and asked them to make sacrifices and do things they cannot achieve in the course of finding an answer to break the cycle of violence. It is bigger than the military. General Petraeus has said so. As a matter of fact, General Petraeus has said there will be no military solution in Iraq. Every general I have met in my five trips to Iraq, every general I have met here in and out of uniform, has said there will not be—cannot be—a military solution.

I have cosponsored the Levin-Reed amendment because it requires that the United States move toward a comprehensive policy on Iraq—a comprehensive policy on Iraq—not just continuing to feed American troops into the middle of a civil war, which is clearly not working, but something in addition to our military security. That new policy must be centered on diplomacy and helping achieve Iraqi political accommodation to get to political reconciliation.

This amendment is responsible. It is comprehensive, forward-looking, compelling, and not all that different, incidentally, from what my other colleagues are offering on the floor of the Senate as options. Yes, it requires a phased, responsible reduction of U.S. forces from Iraq. I say again, a reduction—not a withdrawal—of our forces. No one I know is calling for any sort of precipitous withdrawal or precipitous action to take America out of Iraq now. We couldn't do that anyway. Even if we wanted to withdraw precipitously or quickly, the reality of the logistics would prevent it. The fact is, we are where we are. We have national interests in the Middle East. We have national interests in Iraq. We should not confuse the issue that we debate today. We are not advocating a cut-and-run strategy. I am not sure what cut and run means. It is catchy. It is good sloganeering. But I have yet to hear anyone come to the Senate floor and say: I am for cutting and running. Those who use that term or accuse others of employing that term should define what that means.

Of all the resolutions I am aware of that have been introduced in the Senate on this issue, none that I am aware of is a so-called cut-and-run amendment.

We are talking about a transition in the mission being carried out by U.S. forces in Iraq. A policy, a strategy. Let's make something else clear. The military does not make policy. The military implements policy. The Congress is part of making that policy. Constitutionally we have a role with the President in helping frame and make policy. The military has input into that policy, as they must and as they should, but once the policy is given to the military, they can't alter the policy. They are captive to policy. That is constitutionally the way it is and the way it should be. We are talking about a new policy, a new strategy. We have a legitimate mission to carry out in Iraq, and those various missions are critical to our security, and hopefully, at some point, the stability of Iraq. The Levin-Reed amendment focuses solely on those missions and the transitions of those missions: Counterterrorism, targeting terrorists and other global organizations; training Iraqi forces, protecting U.S. and coalition personnel and facilities, helping maintain territorial integrity of Iraq.

As I have said, nearly all of the other significant amendments I am aware of that have been introduced on the floor of the Senate on Iraq, including the Warner-Lugar amendment, the Salazar-Alexander amendment focused largely on the same limited mission, as the Levin-Reed amendment, as does the Nelson-Collins amendment, on a limited mission. There is an emerging consensus on how our military mission should transition in Iraq as well. Our amendment includes a timeline and would require that this shift in our military mission be completed by April 30 of next year.

Our amendment is not alone in establishing a timeline. Again, the other significant amendments on Iraq also have timelines. The Warner-Lugar amendment recommends beginning the military transition no later than December 31, 2007. That is a timeline. The Salazar-Alexander amendment sets as the sense of the Congress that the transition be completed by the first quarter of 2008. Now, that is a timeline. There is yet another emerging consensus on establishing a timeline to transition our military mission in Iraq. Our amendment also respects that only military professionals—the generals, those who have the responsibility of carrying out the policy; not making the policy, but carrying it out—those professionals determine how many troops will be needed to carry out our limited military mission in Iraq.

So the talk I hear more than occasionally on the Senate floor that somehow the Congress is micromanaging the war is not correct; that we are micromanaging the army is not correct.

Once again, our amendment, the Levin-Reed amendment, sets policy of the military mission in Iraq. That is policy. What is the mission? What is the strategic, diplomatic mission of employing America's power and prestige in Iraq? That is the policy. But the scope of the reduction—the reduction, not the withdrawal but the reduction—of U.S. forces in Iraq will be determined by, and needs to be determined by, our military professionals based on a troop-to-task analysis; not the Congress, not the committees telling the generals how to do anything.

Troop to task is a very simple concept. You connect the requirements of your mission with the force structure needed. We are way out of balance. We have been out of balance since we invaded Iraq in March of 2003. We never had enough force structure. Some of the same people on the floor of the Senate who are now saying: Well, let's listen to the generals, where were they when the generals warned this administration that we didn't have enough men and women and force before we went into Iraq, I didn't hear many of them talking about how much faith we should put in our generals then.

The former Chief of Staff of the United States Army, General Shinseki, said it. He said it openly in the Presiding Officer's Armed Services Committee. When asked the question: What would it take in manpower to remove Saddam Hussein from power and help stabilize and secure Iraq, General Shinseki said: It would take hundreds of thousands of American troops.

This administration completely dismissed that as wildly—I believe as the Deputy Secretary of Defense at the time said—wildly off the mark. Well, he wasn't off the mark, I say to my colleagues. He was exactly right. He was exactly right.

So we have never had the forces to match the mission. That is not new. Some of us may be coming to that conclusion for the first time, but it is not new. We have never had the force structure to match the mission. That is not the fault of the generals. That is not the fault of the military. That is the fault of policymakers.

Our amendment also respects that only military professionals can determine those numbers. The scope of the reduction would stay firmly in the hands of the military professionals. This approach is responsible. Not one U.S. general today will tell you that there can be, there will be, there is a military solution in Iraq.

Then the next question is—and a statement being made often on the floor of the Senate is: Well, we need to buy the Iraqis time. We need to give the Maliki government time. That is true. That is why we have benchmarks. That is why we have some sense of where this is going? Are we making progress or not making progress? Is it getting better or is it getting worse? Now, 4½ years into this, we should have some measurements of giving the government time, but time for what? What is the end game as more Americans sacrifice their lives and a half trillion dollars of America's taxpayers' money has sunk into the sands of Iraq? We are buying time for what? For a political reconciliation brought about by the Iraqis themselves to be able to functionally govern their country with some sense of stability and security. That is going the other way. That hasn't gotten better; it has gotten worse by every measure. So we continue to buy time with American blood and American treasure, for what? For

what? No one wants to answer that question, by the way. We end it with we have to buy time, but the additional part of that equation is: Buy time for what? Do we buy time for another 2, 3, or 4 years?

It is also clear that the generals have said when April comes, and there is a timeline already that is built in—whether we ever deal with it or not in the Congress—there is a timeline built in, and it is called manpower. It is called deployment rotations.

We are pushing our young men and women now to 18-month rotation, and some, by the way, are longer than that because of what is known as a stopgap measure where the Secretary of Defense can stop anyone from leaving a war zone based on the speciality of his or her MOS or job. So we are actually having people stay there longer than 18 months. But now it is 18 months, even though the Secretary of Defense testified in January before the Senate Armed Services Committee that we need to get back to 12 months.

Senator WEBB and I and others, a bipartisan group of Senators / last week had two amendments on that issue. We couldn't get the required 60 votes to go back to a 12-month deployment. So now it is 15 months, and we are pushing even 18 months.

The generals have told us that when this spring comes, there is no more give in those deployment rotations. There is nothing left. So there is a timeline built in already. Whether any of us want to acknowledge that or introduce that, that is a reality.

Any change to policy in Iraq cannot be done in isolation, separate or disconnected, from the broader sense of dynamics in Iraq and the Middle East. That is why this amendment requires a phased reduction be conducted as part of a comprehensive, diplomatic, political, and economic strategy that includes sustained engagement to Iraq's neighbors and the international community.

I am very pleased to note that today the announcement came from the State Department that the United States is now prepared to hold new direct talks with Iran. That is progress, not because Iran wants to be our friend. Of course not. But Iran is a significant power in the Middle East. It is working against our interests in the Middle East. We must engage Iran. I have been calling for dialog with all Middle East nations, including Iran and Syria, or over 3 years. A constructive regional framework for Iraq can only be achieved through sustained diplomacy, not hit or miss, not ''if we have time.''

A vital element of this comprehensive diplomatic strategy must be to internationalize Iraq through an international mediator under the auspices of the U.N. to engage all of Iraq's political, religious, ethnic, and tribal leaders.

I first called for an international mediator in a letter to President Bush in May. Since then, I pressed this issue with Secretary Rice last week, our National Security Adviser, Steve Hadley, 2 weeks ago, and again today with the United Nations Secretary General. It is time to take the American face off Iraq's political process.

The United States is seen as the occupier in Iraq. We must have a new strategy that will further invest the region and the rest of the world to helping stabilize Iraq, reversing Iraq's slide into chaos. And it is chaos, Mr. President. I hear on the floor of the Senate, gee, if we changed our mission, if we moved in any different direction, if we reduced our forces, if we did anything different, Iraq would end in chaos. Some of my colleagues must not understand what is going on in Iraq. We have chaos. We have real chaos in Iraq today. That means there are no good options today. The optics here should be clear, and we should base our new policies and our new strategies on those clear optics that Iraq is in chaos today.

Creating an international mediator would help build some new common interests in the region and in the world. This amendment represents the core elements of a different U.S. strategy for Iraq, a strategy that more accurately understands the grim realities we face today, that we will face at the end of this year, that we will face next spring, and we will face next year. The question is whether the President and Congress will come together to present a new policy for Iraq that can be supported by the American people and protect and advance America's interests in Iraq and the Middle East.

We are coming dangerously close to the moment when the American people will demand that we leave Iraq and pullout of the Middle East. Almost 70 percent of the American people today, by every measurement, say enough is enough. This is not in the U.S. interest nor the world's to leave Iraq that way. That is why the United States needs a new strategy for Iraq now.

Well into our fifth year in Iraq, we are beyond nonbinding language of resolutions. We are beyond calling for new plans or new reports. We are beyond sense-of-the-Senate resolutions. We have to understand where we are today. We are in a very dangerous position in Iraq. Our policy in Iraq has been a disaster. Why are we kidding ourselves otherwise? By any measurement, it is a disaster. It must change now. The time for suggestions is over. If we do not believe our current policy is worthy of the sacrifices being made by our troops, then it is wrong to simply say we will wait until this fall to change course or let's hang on for 2 or 3 more months to see what happens.

We know what is happening. We know what is happening today, we know what has been happening, and we know what is going to happen tomorrow.

I am grateful for the opportunity to express myself on this amendment. I also appreciate the opportunity to cosponsor this responsible amendment with my colleagues. I note again it is a bipartisan amendment, and I hope all my colleagues in the Senate will take a look at all the different options and amendments and spend some time on each because they are each worthy of time, but in the end, the consistency of the amendments that have been presented so far are about one thing, and you can paint it any way you want, but that is a change of mission in Iraq and a new policy in Iraq.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I wish to propound a unanimous consent request, but I would be remiss if I did not recognize Senator HAGEL's leadership on this issue and his articulate vision and years ago his brave service as a soldier in our Army.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be permitted to meet today at 7 p.m. in 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building to consider an original bill entitled the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2007, which will provide health care for needy children.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair did not hear the Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I objected in a timely manner.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I know you did not hear me. I do not wish to keep the Finance Committee from meeting, except that we are being held for a very important debate, and if we are going to be held all night, it is the view of this side of the aisle that we should keep our focus on this very important issue.

I rise today because this is such an important issue. I don't think that any Member on this side of the aisle or the other side of the aisle is insincere in their views about this issue. However, I do think the disagreements are real, and it is so important the Senate do the right thing.

We have before us, of course, the Levin-Reed amendment that would set a deadline and cut and run from Iraq without regard to anything that is happening on the ground, including the Commander in Chief saying: For God's sake, don't do this.

So here we are debating this issue, but I think we have to also talk about the other amendments that are on the floor because we are now seeing a different variety. I think there is an attempt by many of our Members to send a message. None of these amendments would ever become law. I think everyone acknowledges that fact. So every

amendment is meant to send a message.

What is the message? It appears that the basic message is to tell the President to change strategy or to tell the generals what to do or to micromanage the war. All different kinds of messages are being proposed. But the bottom line is we cannot tell the Commander in Chief, the President, nor the commander on the ground, General Petraeus, how to do the jobs we have asked them to do.

We heard from General Petraeus what the new strategy will be. I keep hearing people say we need a new strategy, we need a new plan, a new plan. We are in a new plan. Yet the Senate is saying, when the new plan is in its infancy, when the surge of 30,000 troops has been completed within the last 2 weeks, and yet we are pulling the rug out from under the new plan. It doesn't make sense.

I think all these amendments, all these message amendments are the wrong thing at the wrong time.

We cannot be the greatest country on Earth and say: Don't trust us if you are our ally and don't fear us if you are our enemy, and that is exactly what we would be doing if we leave Iraq because Congress sets a deadline regardless of what is happening on the ground in Iraq.

This is about a war on terror and protecting our freedom. This is not about Iraq in a bubble. It is about making sure we kill terrorism in the world before it ruins everyone's way of life and takes freedom from everyone.

If I believed we were just talking about Iraq and we could isolate Iraq, that would be a very different issue. This is about making sure Iraq does not become a stronghold for terrorists. This is to make sure al-Qaida cannot take over Iraq, terrorize the people as they have done in Afghanistan for years, have the oil revenue that would feed their terrorism and spread it throughout the world. We are fighting al-Qaida in Iraq.

General Petraeus came to the Senate and put forth a different strategy. I asked him about it because I was very concerned about this strategy. I asked him why he thought this would work, why putting our troops outside the green zone and outside the protected areas embedded with Iraqis would make a difference. He talked about the need for the counterinsurgency measures to go to them and also to win over the neighborhoods.

It is said by those who are on the ground and have the expertise that it is working, that in the al-Qaida strongholds, the people have turned against al-Qaida and they are helping America, and the tribal chieftains in that area are helping Americans.

I met with a group of veterans today who have come back from Iraq. They were so strong and so firm. It was uplifting to talk with them, just as it is uplifting to talk with any of our Active-Duty military. But to talk to those who have had the boots on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan who know what is happening, one cannot fail to believe we have to give this a chance, even if the armchair generals back here in Washington have misgivings.

It is so important that despite the sincerity of so many of my colleagues in trying to put forward a different kind of a message, a message to the President—do a plan; we are not going to make you implement the plan, but we are going to make you do one—all the way up to the amendment that we are debating and on which we are going to have a vote tomorrow which is to cut and run.

That is the variety of message amendments that we have pending on this bill, and none of those is the right message. Look at the consequences. Look at the consequences if we leave without making sure Iraq is stable.

Today, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense announced there is going to be a rejuvenation of the talks that include all the people in the region. That is so important. This is something I have talked about for a long time. No longer can the neighbors to Iraq sit back and watch what is happening there and criticize America or anybody else and not take a hand in helping to solve the problems in this area. No longer can they sit back and grade America when it is they who have the very most at stake with an Iraq that might become a haven for terrorists. That is in no one's interest in that region, not even people who want the destruction of America, such as the President of Iran. It is not in his interest or Iran's interest to have a terror stronghold in the Middle East. It is certainly not in the interest of the moderate Arab nations that are trying to have stabilization in that region.

Here we are with a new strategy that is in the process of being implemented, and we have the Senate debating whether to set a deadline and leave, regardless of what has happened on the ground.

This does three bad things. No. 1, it dishonors those who have already died or been maimed. I met people today. I have met people at Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio who have been maimed. I have met with the loved ones of people who have been lost in this war already. If we cut and run, it is akin to saying there wasn't an underlying cause for which they died. That is not true. There is an underlying cause. It is a fight for freedom every bit as much as any war which we have ever fought because if we let a caliphate take over the Middle East, we are not going to live in freedom. That is the purpose the terrorists have, and we cannot let them succeed. We cannot dishonor those who have died for this cause.

No. 2, it puts every one of our troops who have boots on the ground today in Iraq and Afghanistan in harm's way that is a much greater harm than they face in the war itself. It puts a bull's-eye on them because the enemy knows they are leaving, so why not do worse things to our troops, why not get rid of them? That has happened before in retreats in wars.

That would be the worst thing we could do, is to say to the enemy: This is when we are leaving, this is when we are going to draw down, this is when the troops go away. I cannot imagine we would do such a thing.

And No. 3—and this is the policy that the Senate must stand for, and that is to stand for the integrity of America, the integrity of the greatest country on Earth—that we will be a formidable enemy and a reliable ally, that we will not flinch when times get tough. It is a legitimate argument about why we got here or when we should have had more troops or how the war has been run up to now. That is legitimate. We can talk about that, and it is a legitimate area to debate. But what is not legitimate is—because it is a very tough time—that we would say times are too tough; America must leave. What kind of honor would that bring on our country and this United States Senate? None. It would not bring honor on this country to cut and run because times are tough.

This is a fight for freedom. This is a fight to live in peace and harmony with people of different backgrounds and different faiths. This is taking a stand for freedom because America is the country that has the commitment and the capacity to fight for freedom in the world.

If we cut and run because times are tough, who would stand for freedom? Who would have the capability to stand for freedom?

It would be unthinkable to go against the general who is in charge in Iraq, the head of the CIA, Michael Hayden, who has said also that "if we withdraw from Iraq prematurely it would become a safe haven, perhaps more dangerous than the one al-Qaida had in Afghanistan." We would be going against one of the wisest Secretaries of State we have ever had in our history, Henry Kissinger, who said:

> Whatever our domestic timetables, the collapse of the American effort in Iraq would be a geopolitical calamity.

It would go against the wisdom of wars all the way back to the beginning.

During the Civil War, General Ulysses S. Grant, who did lead the Union forces to victory, said:

> Experience proves that the man who obstructs a war in which his Nation is engaged, no matter whether right or wrong, occupies no enviable place in life or history.

Mr. President, this is not a new concept. This is a concept that has been tested time and time and time again, and retreating without honor is not an option for the greatest country on earth.

I hope the Senate will not look at the election next year or the political whims, even though I know they are strong, and I know sometimes it is

tough to stand up and do what is right for the long term when the short term is very tough. But this is the Senate. We are the elected leaders of the States of our country. And they look to us for leadership. We cannot do less. Any of these amendments that are message amendments that will never become law, and we know it, are an undercutting of our troops when they have boots on the ground.

No matter how sincere the effort of all the authors of these amendments are, and I know they are sincere, I know they are looking for a way to send that right message, there is no message in these amendments that can be right for our country. It is very simple and very clear. We are the United States of America, and the world expects our country to lead, to be strong, to be unwavering, and to be as good as our military, which everyone acknowledges is the best in the world. I just hope the Senate can meet that test.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we are the greatest country in the world, and that is why I ask unanimous consent that amendment No. 2088 be withdrawn and that at 7 p.m. today the Senate vote on the Levin-Reed amendment, No. 2087, with the time between now and then equally divided in the usual form and no second-degree amendments in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, it is once again clear, in the greatest country in the world, where debate is supposed to be free and open, where majority rules, we have been blocked now by our Republican friends for the third time from having a vote on the Levin-Reed amendment, which simply says it is time to change course in Iraq.

It is not cut and run. You can stand here and say anything. I could say anything: Black, white, pink, brown. It means nothing. This is not cut and run. Read the amendment. The amendment is very clear. It is very well thought out.

What it says is that we will start a redeployment of our troops out of Iraq in 120 days; that we will seek diplomatic solutions; that we will change the mission, get our brave,—unbelievably brave—and courageous troops out of the middle of a civil war and give them a mission that can be accomplished. And that mission, actually, is threefold—one is to go after al-Qaida in a counterterrorism effort, one is to continue to train the Iraqi forces, and one is to protect our troops, force protection.

You can say cut and run. It isn't cut and run. It sounds good. Create a straw man. But that is not what Levin-Reed does.

It is clear our Republican friends will not allow us to vote on this amendment, and I think I know why. I think we can win this amendment, for the first time. I think we can get more than 50 votes, including a few brave Republicans for the first time on a real amendment. And so instead of allowing us to vote, as we allowed them to vote on their amendment, the Cornyn amendment, they will not allow a vote. They are setting an artificial number—60. We have to meet a 60-vote threshold in order to get to the Levin-Reed amendment.

All we are saying is let us vote. People are dying—our people—every day. They are getting blown up. They are wounded. My State has lost 21 percent of the dead, many of whom never saw their 21st birthday. We can do better. We can do better. We have given this President 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, almost 5 years, and we are in a worse position.

Oh, my colleague from Texas says, things are working. If you listen to her you would think it is just wonderful over there. Then I would ask, in a rhetorical fashion: Why do 60 percent of the Iraqis think it is OK to shoot and kill an American soldier? This is where we are going to keep our troops? And that is because we are the greatest country in the world?

The greatest country in the world doesn't keep the status quo going if it isn't working. The greatest country in the world steps up to the plate and says: It is time for a change. And it is time, Mr. President, for a change.

The head of Iraq said: America, you want to go? Go. We can take care of ourselves.

You know what is interesting is, I met with General Petraeus when I was in Iraq. He was at that time the head of training the Iraqis, and he was high on the Iraqi soldiers. He told me, and he told Senator MURRAY—he told all of us on that trip—we had Republicans and Democrats—don't you worry. At that time he said: We have trained 200,000 Iraqis, and they are top notch—they are top notch—and they will be able to take over.

Unfortunately, the head of Iraq didn't think that was true. But General Petraeus, oh, he was Mr. Rosy Scenario. He said everything was great. And when I came back I gave a report to my constituents, and I said: You know, I never voted for this war—I thought it was a mistake—but I bear good news. The Iraqis are being trained. As they step up, we will step down.

I believed the President when he said that one. Not to be. Not to be. The money we are pouring into that country a minute, folks—$250,000 a minute—while we turn to our poor kids and say: Sorry, we can't renew the children's health insurance; and, gee, we are really sorry 2 million kids are waiting in line for afterschool. We are really sorry. So we are sending good dollars after bad dollars, endlessly, open checkbook.

The Iraqis don't want us there. They do not want us there. The head of Iraq said: Go, leave, we are fine. What are we doing? Are we that stubborn as a nation? Well, I think the majority of this United States Senate might very well be ready to vote to begin the redeployment of the troops. I don't know that. My colleagues will not let us get there. Well, maybe I have convinced them, so I am going to try this again.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that amendment No. 2088 be withdrawn and that at 7:30 p.m. today the Senate vote on the Levin-Reed amendment No. 2087, with the time between now and then equally divided in the usual form and no second-degree amendment be in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BOND. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California retains the floor.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, that is now the fourth time—the fourth time—that our colleagues have objected. This Senate must not be a rubberstamp for any administration, especially when our constituents are getting killed. We are here to speak for the people.

Now, my colleague from Texas says we need to take a stand for freedom—we need to take a stand for freedom—and I agree with her. However, once we allow the Iraqis, with our Armed Forces protecting them every step of the way, to have three elections—three elections—to be able to draw up a constitution, to have the ability to self-govern, we can't force them to do that.

It is true that there is al-Qaida there. Al-Qaida, according to our own military, is responsible for 15 percent of the violence—15 percent—and it is ugly violence, it is horrific violence, and we should go after it. After all, al-Qaida cells didn't exist in Iraq—I have the document to prove it—until we went in. We have been a recruiting tool. Unfortunately, this policy has been the recruiting tool. I have the documentation from the State Department that showed right before 9/11 how many cells there were in each country. Iraq wasn't even mentioned. But they are there now, and we need to get them, and that is part of the Levin-Reed amendment: to change the mission to go after them.

A fight for freedom? If people don't want freedom, can we force them to want freedom? If people decide to kill their neighbor, what are we going to do? Shia on Shia violence, Sunni on Shia, Shia on Sunni—just read the history books and you will see how long this has been going on, and we put our brave men and women right in the middle.

This is the greatest country on Earth, by far and away, and the greatest country on Earth doesn't have a Senate that is a rubberstamp. It doesn't have a Senate that fights for the status quo when the status quo isn't working. The greatest country on Earth shouldn't send our men and

women back two, three, four, and five times to fight without adequate rest, and yet our Republican friends set up a 60-vote hurdle for Senator WEBB and Senator HAGEL so we couldn't even pass something that said give them rest before they go back; give them the equipment before they go back. It is not what the greatest country on Earth does to its fighting men and women. That is wrong.

A New York Times story, here is a woman, April Ponce De Leon, who describes herself and her husband as ''gung-ho marines,'' and in 2 weeks she deploys to Iraq where her husband has been fighting since March. But she says she stopped believing in the war last month after a telephone conversation with him.

He started telling me he doesn't want me to go and do the things he has been doing.

That is what CPL Ponce De Leon, 22, speaking by telephone, said as she boxed up her belongings in their apartment near Camp Lejeune, NC.

He said that we have all decided it's time for us to go home.

And the wife said:

You mean go home and rest? And he said, I mean go home and not go back.

And she said:

This is from someone who has been training for the past nine years to go to combat and who has spent his whole life wanting to be a marine. That's when I realized I couldn't support the war anymore, even though I will follow my orders.

So when we listen to some of our colleagues make it sound as if those of us who want to change the mission and start redeploying the troops in 120 days don't stand behind our troops, I say, Mr. President, it is the opposite. They can't speak out. They do not have a box to stand on and a microphone. We owe them the truth as we see it.

It is perfectly legitimate for our colleagues to disagree with us. Absolutely. And I would die for their right to disagree with us. But what I think is wrong is when it comes to a vote of conscience like a war, to set up a 60-vote hurdle. Let's have a vote. Let the majority rule. Let's see what happens.

What are you afraid of? The President has already said he is going to veto this thing, but it is our job to keep the pressure on, Mr. President. So I am very proud to stand here tonight. I am very sorry I have asked twice to go straight to a vote on the Levin-Reed amendment, but we are not able to do that.

Others will come, and I will be back after several hours myself. When you lose 21 percent in your home State, you have a lot on your heart; a lot you want to say. So I look forward to coming back to the floor. And to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, I know this is a tough night. I know it is emotional, but I am glad we are doing it. And I hope at the end of the day, when someone asks unanimous consent to go to a vote, there will be no objection and we can do so.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I would comment that in the process of working out votes, the minority leader has offered to the majority leader to schedule votes on this and other amendments at an appropriate time. There is no need to do the all-night gig. It may make grand Hollywood theater, but it doesn't necessarily move forward what is an extremely important bill.

This is a bill that not only authorizes our war fighters, it provides additional resources. It provides them a badly needed 3-plus percent pay increase. We traditionally move these bills forward because, when we are fighting a war, we need to support the troops. But these amendments are designed to substitute the judgment of 535 generals in this wonderful air-conditioned Capitol for the judgment of the generals and the commanders in the field who every day go out and fight that battle to maintain peace, restore peace and security in the area, and to protect our home front.

The Iraqis have said they don't want us there permanently. I think we all agree we don't want to be there permanently. But they also said we need to continue to train their troops. We need to make sure they maintain security in the area. They are not ready to do that now.

Sunni sheiks in Al Anbar Province, which I was pleased to visit 2 months ago, are working with our forces and they are making great progress. They have been sending in their young Sunni men to be trained as Iraqi police and Iraqi Army. They need training. They are not ready yet. They are being very successful because our American marines are embedded with them. With them, they have taken Ramadi, the capital of Al Anbar, which was totally under the control of al-Qaida a few months ago, and made it a safe place not only for Americans but for everyday Iraqis to walk the streets, to do their business, to get back to a normal life.

I am here today as the vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to talk about an important report issued today. Today, the Director of National Intelligence released key findings that could be made public on the National Intelligence Estimate, or NIE, on the terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland. That report outlined a number of key findings of which I think our colleagues and all Americans should be aware.

First, today's intelligence report found that carrying the battle to al-Qaida, gaining worldwide cooperation in the war on terror, has set them back. They have made our country and other free countries safer because al-Qaida and its related radical Islamist groups are no longer able to have the free rein they had prior to our attacks to clean them out of Afghanistan and to keep them out of Iraq.

In fact, our efforts have prevented al-Qaida from attacking the United States since the September 11, 2001, attacks, and they have disrupted a number of terrorist plots outlined in the classified portion of the report, designed to take effect in the United States of America.

One of the good parts about it is that the terrorist groups are now telling each other the United States is a harder target. That makes them less likely to attack here. That is great news. It means the hard work of our men and women in the military, our intelligence services and our law enforcement in the United States, are doing their job—and they are succeeding.

While America is safer, there are still threats around the world, and we have to remain vigilant in fighting terrorists at home and abroad. The intelligence report notes that al-Qaida leadership continues to plan attacks. They have a relative safe haven in the northwest area of Pakistan known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA. They are increasing their capabilities from that area to launch attacks on the United States.

It is important to point out that these findings do not mean, as some erroneously reported last week, that al-Qaida is as strong as it was before the September 11 attacks, or even nearly as strong. It does mean that America must always be prepared for attacks on our homeland and continue to take appropriate offensive and defensive counterterrorism activities.

Unfortunately, the intelligence report, the NIE, also finds that international cooperation against terrorism may wane as September 11 becomes a distant memory. That ought to be a real concern to all of us. I hope my colleagues take note because this should serve as a warning to all of us, a warning for Congress, and the American people to remain vigilant and committed to the war on terror. Our responsibility in Congress is to continue to give law enforcement and the intelligence community the tools they need to track, interrogate, capture or kill and prosecute terrorists, such as the PATRIOT Act and the modernization of the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act—very important; Also, the 9/11 Commission recommendations on changing congressional oversight to make it effective in dealing with the new challenges put on the intelligence community today.

Knowing full well that the retreat-and-defeat crowd does not have the votes, I see the majority has opted for political gains and political theater. With apologies to our dedicated floor staff and the many wonderful men and women who keep this place operating, you are going to be operating all night long, around the clock, for a political show, not to achieve anything significant in terms of helping win the war.

Foremost, the biggest losers from all this grandstanding are our fighting men and women who are risking their lives on the line in Iraq, carrying out

their mission and the mission they believe they are carrying out successfully.

The majority has a political game plan. But, sadly, it is not about how to achieve victory, it is a plan blindly fixated on trying to embarrass the President, trying to figure out a way they can win votes for November 2008. It offers no help for the creation of stability and freedom in Iraq and thus continued safety for ourselves.

Our commanders and fighting men and women, while this debate is underway, are actually trying to achieve victory. But they have been listening to us and they have questions. They send questions to us saying: Why are you not going to give General Petraeus's plan, which he said he would report on in September, an opportunity to demonstrate it can work? Why have you no patience? We, who are sitting in the air-conditioned Halls of Congress while they are out in 130-plus degree heat risking their lives. They are willing to wait. But they are watching and listening to the cut-and-run arguments. So are our allies, Sunnis, such as the Sunni sheiks in Al Anbar Province who are risking everything if we run and leave because they have taken on al-Qaida. They don't want to live under al-Qaida. The neighbors of Iraq who are gradually realizing they have a role in helping Iraq be stable are seeing us falter and hesitate.

Do you know who else is listening? Al-Qaida and the violent terrorists with whom we are at war, and I suspect they are absolutely revelling in what they are hearing. I imagine they loved hearing our majority leader saying the war has been lost. That is not a great message for our troops but one that certainly brings cheer to the hearts of al-Qaida.

They call for troop withdrawal deadlines. They say the cost of war is too high. The constant barrage of negative news without the balanced report on the progress our troops are making—we need only listen to the words of the terrorists themselves who have identified Iraq as the central front on the war on terrorism. Osama bin Laden, in his audio message to what he hoped were his fellow Muslims in December of 2004, said:

> The world's millstone and pillar is in Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate.

Our own servicemembers such as 1LT Pete Hegseth, an Iraqi war veteran and director of the Vets for Freedom recently, knows the importance of achieving victory. He said, as one who has been on the frontlines:

> Iraq today is the front line of a global Jihad being waged against America and its allies. Both Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have said so.

But despite this enormous effort, the retreat-and-defeat crowd still wants to micromanage this war 8,000 miles away from the fight and set timetables and troop movements and ultimately to engineer a defeat brought on by retreat.

These actions most egregiously send mixed messages to our enemies all across the globe that our Nation is fractured, weak, and does not have the will to see it through. This same message can discourage allies and the millions of Iraqis who are risking their lives for a chance at freedom by supporting us. For not only is the safety and security of our Nation and allies at stake but so, too, is our credibility.

Critics of us have frequently claimed the war has damaged the U.S. image and credibility throughout the world. Yet the retreat-and-defeat crowd ignores the irreparable harm that would be done here were we to leave this mission unfinished.

If you think our image and reputation has plummeted, wait and watch it nosedive if we were to leave Iraq before finishing the job. Think about what would happen to the millions of Iraqi citizens and leaders who took a stand against terrorism, who committed to take a stand with us to rebuild their country and fight against the forces of radical Islam and terrorism. What are we to say to the millions of Iraqis who trusted America and believed we would stay until the mission was complete, only to see them slaughtered by terrorists as a result of our abandoning them before they were able to stand on their own.

I mentioned on this floor before, what did we say to the thousands of South Vietnamese or millions of Cambodians who put their trust in America and were slaughtered after we abandoned them? History has taught us that when America abandons its commitments to spreading liberty and freedom, we are not the only ones who suffer. Hundreds of thousands may well suffer, but it will come back to harm us and haunt us in our homeland—not only our credibility.

In January of this year, before the Senate Intelligence Committee, the leaders—the Director of National Intelligence, the CIA Director, the Defense Intelligence Agency Director—testified in public session. They said if we pulled out on a political timetable, chaos would ensue. What would happen?

No. 1, there would be a tremendous increase in slaughter among Sunni and Shia in Iraq.

No. 2, al-Qaida would be able to establish a safe haven, a platform where they could get the oil revenues they needed to fund their efforts and significantly increase the threat to our United States of America and possibly even to foment a regionwide civil war, as other nations would come in to the rescue of their coreligionists in Iraq.

To ignore these considerations and questions simply because they are perceived to be more politically palatable than continuing the vital mission that our troops are fighting is shortsighted at best and dangerous at worst. Those who are attempting to end the war precipitously because they are vested politically in defeat do not want to talk about the fact that the war in Iraq will do anything but end—in fact would only grow more dangerous—if we leave our enemies in Iraq, unlike in Vietnam, the victors. The victors would follow us home. The North Vietnamese did not follow us home after we lost in Vietnam. Al-Qaida will follow us home if we allow them to achieve victory over us in Iraq.

We have seen in recent weeks, since the implementation of General Petraeus's plan, movement has begun in the right direction. When I returned from Iraq in May, I observed, even at that point, some initial signs that the planning and working was moving in the right direction. Sunni sheiks in Anbar are now fighting al-Qaida; more than 50 joint U.S.-Iraq stations have been established in Baghdad, conducting regular patrols, resulting in increased security and actionable intelligence.

Muqtada al-Sadr has felt the heat. His followers, while perhaps have demonstrated against American troops, are not contesting them. They and Jaysh al-Mahdi, the Shia militant group, has stood down. The Iraqi Army and police forces are increasingly fighting on their own, with their size and capability growing.

July 16, the Wall Street Journal carried an article by Omar Fadhil. He said the surge is working, fully operational for barely a month. He defines the two most dangerous enemies in Iraq we face in Iraq, Muqtada al-Sadr's militia and al-Qaida, and he says:

> Sadr's militias have moved the main battlefield south to cities like Samwah, Nasiriyah and Diwaniyah where there's no American surge of troops, and from which many Iraqi troops were recalled to serve in Baghdad. But over there, too, the Iraqi security forces and local administrations did not show the weakness that Sadr was hoping to see. As a result, Sadr's representatives have been forced to accept ''truces.''
>
> This may make things sound as if Sadr has the upper hand, that he can force a truce on the state. But, the fact this is missing from news reports is that, with each new eruption of clashes, Sadr's position becomes weaker as tribes and local administrations join forces to confront his outlaw militias.
>
> And regarding al-Qaida, he writes that they, al-Qaida, have not been any luckier than Sadr, and the tide began to turn even before the surge was announced. The change came from the most unlikely city and unlikely people, Ramadi and its Sunni tribes.
>
> He goes on to say: In Baghdad the results have been just as spectacular so far. The district where al-Qaida claimed to have established it Islamic emirate is losing big now, and at the hands of its former allies who have turned on al-Qaida and are slowly reaching out to government.

MG Rick Lynch, 3rd Infantry Division Commander, provided a telling example in yesterday's New York Times.

In the village of Al Taqa, about 20 miles southwest of Baghdad, Lynch said women and children were taping plastic pipes on streetlamps to warn Iraqi security forces of roadside bombs. He also stated that locals have exposed al-Qaida hideouts, helped troops locate 170 large caches of arms, and guaranteed organized armed neighborhood controls could keep safety.

While I would agree that there is no guarantee of victory, and we have a

long way to go, we certainly need to make every effort to achieve it. The war in Iraq is far more important on a front that is far larger than that battlefield. It is the global battlefield. That is why we are fighting in Iraq, to keep our country safe, to make sure al-Qaida does not get the upper hand, to make sure our troops, who are carrying out their mission to stop al-Qaida, can do so in Iraq rather than hand them the victory which will embolden them, which will allow them significant resources from the oil-rich Iraqi sands and give them the courage to expand recruiting and attack our country.

We cannot allow cut-and-run amendments to be added to a vital authorization bill to support our American troops.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I welcome the debate on the U.S. role in Iraq, and I urge my colleagues to allow us to vote on the issue. I think each of us was elected to cast our votes and this is the most critical issue that is facing this Nation and we should be able to cast a vote on this issue, hopefully tonight.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment offered by Senators LEVIN and REED to the Defense authorization legislation. It is similar to the provisions Congress originally passed on the emergency supplemental appropriations bill that President Bush vetoed.

We now have more information than we did 3 months ago when we acted on the supplemental appropriations bill. We know the President's surge policy has not worked. By the President's own assessment, the Iraqis have failed to meet the most important interim benchmarks required for stability in Iraq. The Levin-Reed amendment would change our mission in Iraq to limit U.S. involvement to conducting counterterrorism operations, protecting U.S. forces and military infrastructure during redeployment, and training Iraqi forces.

It would set a deadline of April 30, 2008, for all U.S. combat troops to be removed from attempting to quell the civil war in Iraq. We should not wait a single additional day in changing the U.S. mission in Iraq.

I have opposed the war from the inception. In October 2002, I voted against giving President Bush the authority to use U.S. troops in Iraq. I have likewise opposed the President's management of this war. The administration misrepresented or ignored intelligence about Iraq. The administration's effort to garner international support for the war was totally inadequate. Our troops went to Iraq without adequate equipment. The President failed to prepare for the insurgency. The leadership in the White House wrongfully ordered the dismantling of the internal Iraqi police, putting the local communities at the mercy of the insurgents.

Our Nation and the Iraqis have paid a heavy price for the administration's mistakes. To date, over 3,600 U.S. soldiers have died and over 23,000 have been wounded, many sustaining life-changing injuries. Seventy-seven of the brave men and women who have lost their lives have been from Maryland. U.S. taxpayers have spent at least $320 billion so far. According to the Congressional Research Service, the war in Iraq currently costs $10 billion per month.

These expenditures represent lost opportunities in our own country.

Tragically, we have lost our focus in the war against terrorism. Afghanistan is not secure, and Osama bin Laden is still at large. For over a year, there has been a significant increase in the level of violence in Iraq. The main reason for this escalation has been sectarian violence.

U.S. military commanders have confirmed that the Sunni-Shiite conflict is the greatest source of violence in Iraq. Iraq is in the midst of a civil war, and the presence of American troops in the middle of a civil war is counterproductive. In fact, there is not one civil war raging in Iraq, there are many civil wars in Iraq. In Baghdad, Sunnis are fighting Shias. In Anbar and Diyala, Sunnis are fighting each other. In southern Iraq, Shiites are fighting each other. And around Kirkuik and Mosul Kurds are fighting Sunnis.

Our first priority should be to remove our troops from the middle of these civil wars. The Levin-Reed amendment will do just that. In order to bolster our military and refocus its attention on the global terrorism threat, this Congress has attempted, on more than one occasion, to redeploy U.S. forces and change the mission of our operations in Iraq.

President Bush and a minority in Congress have rebuffed this effort. Instead, President Bush proposes a strategy he claimed would improve the situation in Iraq: increasing the number of troops deployed, and stepping up traditional counterinsurgent operations.

According to President Bush, increased U.S. troops would stabilize the country so that its national leaders could operate in a safe environment in which to reach political agreement on oil and revenue sharing laws and amend their constitution. Furthermore, so the theory went, increased U.S. troop levels would enable us to accelerate training initiatives so that the Iraqi Army and police force could assume control over all security in the country by November 2007.

President Bush sent over 28,000 more soldiers into Iraq with the hope of fulfilling the goals of his plan. President Bush insists on continuing this surge policy. But the so-called surge is not working. Some of the most brutal acts of sectarian violence have occurred during the surge.

For example, in March of this year, a truck bomb in a Shia neighborhood killed 150 people. The Shia-controlled police units responded by systematically kidnapping and murdering 70 Sunnis. This is not an isolated episode.

Approximately 600 U.S. soldiers have died during the surge, and more than 3,000 have been wounded. Violence in many sectors of Iraq has increased. Despite the valiant effort of our troops, terrorist attacks in Iraq and around the world continue to rise. Tensions between countries in the Middle East region are growing.

Middle East autocrats have an even firmer grip on power. The Arab-Israeli conflict has deteriorated. Our military is stretched thin. And the most recent intelligence analysis reports that the al-Qaida group that attacked our Nation, the al-Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan, is stronger now than at any time since September 11, 2001.

The 2007 emergency supplemental appropriations bill required President Bush to report to Congress and the American people on the progress Iraqis are making in achieving certain benchmarks. These benchmarks were established so there could be a new way forward in Iraq with regard to securing civilian populations, establishing the Iraqi security force's capacity, and supporting an Iraqi Government that would have credibility and confidence at the national and provincial levels.

We now have received the first report from the administration. This assessment confirms the failures of the President's policies in Iraq by his own objectives. The Iraqis have failed to make satisfactory progress in key areas. For example, it is critical, critical for the Iraqi Parliament to pass legislation ensuring equitable distribution of the hydrocarbon oil revenues. Without such legislation, it is difficult to believe that the ethnic communities will have confidence in their central government. The Bush administration's assessment on this benchmark: not satisfactory.

Another benchmark concerns disarmament of the militias. We have heard about the militias and how they run their own affairs and take over ethnic communities. It is necessary that the Iraqi security forces be the national military. Eliminating militia control of local security is an additional benchmark. The Bush administration's assessment on those key benchmarks: not satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

Our goal has always been for the Iraqi commanders being able to make tactical and operational decisions without political intervention to uncover and pursue all extremists on all sides. The Iraqi security forces provide even-handed enforcement of the law. That is critical if the Government is going to have the confidence of its people. The Bush administration's own assessment on these benchmarks: unsatisfactory.

It is critical that the Iraqi security forces be able to operate independently. This benchmark is particularly important if we are going to be able to

draw down on the U.S. troops in Iraq. The Bush administration's assessment on this benchmark: not satisfactory.

The interim report the administration released last week confirms that Iraqi security forces still cannot be trusted to enforce the law fairly. Some have taken part in sectarian violence, and some even have turned on American troops.

In order to have national reconciliation and the political elements for stability in Iraq, it is necessary to enact and implement debaathification reforms; another critical benchmark that was established with the United States and the Iraqis. The Bush administration's assessment on this benchmark: not satisfactory.

Most troubling, the Iraqi Government is seriously weakened, and many predict its collapse. The major Sunni party is currently boycotting the Government. Without Sunni participation, meaningful progress on any key political benchmarks is impossible.

Whatever progress the President's interim report claims, it is clear that our military has not curbed sectarian violence, nor has the troop escalation provided sectarian influence over and infiltration of the Iraqi security forces, or forced Iraqi political leaders to make the tough decisions necessary to move forward toward peace.

I think it is time to acknowledge that President Bush's troop escalation has failed. It has failed to make Iraq more secure. The Iraqi Government remains incapable of organizing its security forces or its legislature to achieve a semblance of stability or political reconciliation.

It is time to change the mission in Iraq. The cost of further delays in lives, material, treasure, standing in the world, is just too great. President Bush's strategy has put this Nation at greater risk, a risk that metastasizes each day that we sit by and wait. Wait for what? For new evidence of failure to accumulate, for news that more American soldiers have died and Iraqi civilians have been killed?

It is critical for the United States to change policy in Iraq, and it starts by removing our troops from the middle of a civil war. The Levin-Reed amendment would do that. Our new mission must recognize that the opportunity for sweeping regional change, if it ever existed, has passed.

Instead, we need to focus on realistic objectives which include preventing the conflict in Iraq from igniting a broader regional war and preventing genocide.

Unfortunately, we cannot rewrite history. The United States does have a responsibility toward assisting the Iraqis and working for peace in that region. It is in the interests of our country to do that. There is no easy path to achieve the objectives of stability in Iraq and protection of all of its ethnic communities.

As the bipartisan Iraq Study Group noted:

> There is no action the American military can take that by itself can bring about success in Iraq.

The efforts will most certainly include stepped-up diplomatic efforts. Iraq's neighbors have a stake in Iraqi stability. The war in Iraq has produced hundreds of thousands of refugees. An escalation of the conflict will mean even more refugees, which is a major concern to Iraq's neighbors.

An escalation in the conflict means the spread of fundamentalism and sectarian violence, and an increase in basic crime and lawlessness, not just to Iraq but to the region.

We must support and broaden efforts made to create the International Compact for Iraq, a 5-year plan launched this past April under the auspices of the United Nations with benchmarks for Iraq's national reconciliation and economic reconstruction.

That compact includes formal commitments of support from the international community. But we must begin to have a broader diplomatic and economic vision in the Middle East that includes engaging both the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The various agencies of the United Nations are best suited to tackle the myriad problems plaguing Iraq. Matters of security, training, economics, and community development and providing electricity, water, and sanitation service are all areas where the United Nations has expertise.

Just as important, the United States should request OSCE to assist Iraq as a partner for cooperation. There is precedent for this. Afghanistan has already moved in that direction. Afghanistan has begun participation in OSCE proceedings under this program. This status could allow OSCE to assist Iraq with collective border security, police training—which is desperately needed—immigration and religious tolerance efforts.

Engaging the UN and OSCE could help initiate much needed multilateral and bilateral engagement with both friendly nations such as Turkey and with hostile nations such as Iran and Syria.

Engagement of the international community to deal with Iran and Syria's destabilizing regional policies is a critical factor that is needed and a renewed effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Iraq should request assistance from the United Nations and other international forces to help prevent continued ethnic cleansing. According to the United Nations 2005 World Summit, a high-level plenary meeting of the 60th session of the General Assembly, states have a responsibility to protect their population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. This is an international responsibility, not solely a U.S. responsibility.

I believe the strategy I have just outlined presents the best chance of helping the Iraqis negotiate a government and a governmental structure that has the confidence of its people, that protects the rights of all of its citizens, and builds the democratic institutions such as an independent judiciary and a market-based economy that are so vital to a successful country.

There is a difference between being resolute and being stubborn. We can no longer ignore overwhelming evidence or recoil from the cold reality the facts on the ground reveal. President Bush's policies have failed. The world has an interest in a safe and secure Iraq. I believe efforts to rebuild the country must be a shared responsibility among nations.

There is no more time for delay. It is time to change the mission, redeploy our troops currently stationed in Iraq, and internationalize the effort to bring stability to that country and to the Middle East. Such a strategy could give the Iraqis a real hope for peace and give Americans the best chance to achieve our objectives in that region of the world.

Our soldiers have honored our country by their incredible service. We owe it to our soldiers to change our mission now so we have the best chance to achieve these objectives.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, you would never know it from our debate the last couple of weeks, but we are here to talk about the Defense authorization bill, this rather large bill that is at all of our desks. Much broader than just any particular conversation about Iraq, or any particular battle, this is to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008, for military activities and the Department of Defense, for military construction, for defense activities and the Department of Energy, to proscribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and other purposes.

One of the most important bills that we debate and pass, this includes money for aircraft, missiles, weapons systems, vehicles, all of the things we need to protect and secure our country—a very important bill.

I appreciate that the minority a number of times this evening has said: We need to go ahead and vote, particularly on the amendment in front of us, the Levin amendment. And while the normal procedure is to get agreements between the sides on when we vote, the minority filed cloture on this bill. There is really no need to delay the cloture vote any further.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Could I just offer an observation? We are not the minority, we are the majority.

Mr. DEMINT. Thank you. Bad habits die hard. Thank you for correcting me.

But we do need to move ahead with the cloture vote. There is no need for the theatrics through the evening on this. And since the majority has filed for a cloture vote, I ask unanimous

consent that the cloture vote for the pending Levin amendment occur at 8:30 this evening.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LEVIN. Reserving the right to object, I wonder if the Senator will repeat that.

Mr. DEMINT. I ask unanimous consent that the cloture vote on the pending Levin amendment occur at 8:30 this evening.

Mr. LEVIN. Objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, it is clear that the cloture motion as has been filed by the majority is clearly not what they want to happen this evening. So it does seem to be that this is all about a political circus to keep us here all night for some political theater to try to embarrass the President and in the process demoralize our troops and embolden our enemies.

Instead of talking about substantive amendments to the Defense authorization bill, what I hear the majority speaking of is message amendments, to try to message their political theater.

The fact is, this is about winning elections. The majority has given many quotes to the media. One senior Democratic aide on Fox News, when asked about staying up all night, said: Is this a publicity stunt? Yes.

Senator REID was quoted as saying at a press conference: I don't know if we will get 60 votes, but I tell you one thing, there are 21 Republicans up for reelection this time.

Senator REID was quoted in the Washington Post as: We are going to pick up Senate seats as a result of this war. Senator SCHUMER has shown me numbers that are compelling and astounding.

So while the majority is putting us through political theater in hopes of picking up Senate seats in 2008, our National Intelligence Estimate, which just came out, is very clear in their key judgment. It says: We judge that the U.S. homeland will face a persistent and evolving terrorist threat over the next 3 years.

The main threat comes from Islamic terrorist groups themselves, especially al-Qaida driven by their undiminished intent to attack the homeland and a continued effort by these terrorists groups to adopt and improve their capabilities.

The report is clear that we have a broad threat, a global threat. It is not just about Iraq. The whole Defense authorization is very important. We should not be sidelining the discussion of important issues of national defense and security with political theater this evening.

But it is important, as some of my colleagues have done, to kind of review what we have been through the last few months. Certainly, all of us are concerned about the progress in Iraq, the safety of our troops. We all want to finish our job with honor, with victory, to bring our troops home.

We have had a lot of debate this year. But recently when the President submitted his war spending bill, emergency supplemental bill, to fund our troops, we had a lot of debate. My Democratic colleagues had a lot of different ideas. The President vetoed one version. After that, we came to an agreement. The Democrats would force the President to agree that after we sent General Petraeus there—and that was a unanimous thing, to send General Petraeus to Baghdad to secure the area, we sent thousands of new troops. The Democrats agreed on that funding, but they requested that we have a report from General Petraeus in the middle of September to find out what progress we were making. We all agreed to that. But after we all agreed and had the signing at the White House, that is now not good enough for my Democratic colleagues.

As we heard one political strategist say about the Democrats, any day they are not talking about Iraq is a bad day. They want to make political hay out of this difficult situation that our country faces.

We have a new plan almost every day of how we are going to withdraw and retreat, a strategy du jour in the Senate. We will be talking about a lot of those new strategies as we go through the evening.

But as has already been mentioned by some of my Republican colleagues who talk a lot with the troops who come home, almost without exception they believe in our mission, and they believe they can win. What we are asking tonight of the majority is to let them win. Let Petraeus do what we sent him to do. Give him the time that we gave him—until September—to demonstrate that we can secure Baghdad, at least reasonably, in a way that the Government can function and the economy can rebound and the country can begin to establish itself as a free and independent democracy.

What we are seeing again is what we have seen over the past years. My Democratic colleagues, while well intended, are very often weak on defense and national security on almost every measure fighting for security. We would not even give our homeland security the same tools to fight terrorists as we give our law enforcement to fight drug dealers. Certainly, terrorists are as much a threat to us.

Some of my Democratic colleagues have even said this is a bumper sticker campaign, not a real war. I think we have to begin this whole process by recognizing, as our national intelligence estimate tells us time and again, this is a real threat, a continuing threat, one that we need to be prepared for in many ways, and we need to develop more of a consensus in the Senate of how we are going to fight it.

Our troops do believe in what they are doing. They believe it is a right cause, and they believe they can win. We need to let them win. We shouldn't continue to talk through the night and talk day after day about ''we have lost'' or ''we can't win'' or ''we shouldn't be there'' or ''we are not making progress,'' when those who are there doing the fighting are telling us quite a different story.

Mr. President, I wish to address at least one amendment to the Defense authorization bill that I think is an example of what we need to be doing to make our military more efficient. There are a lot of things we do as a Congress that force our military to do things maybe for political reasons that don't help us militarily. One is related to aircraft retirement.

I have an amendment that I hope we can get to, amendment No. 2302, that is related to aircraft retirement. Some call it flyable storage. I was amazed to find out that Congress has required the Air Force to maintain in flying condition permanently grounded aircraft at the cost of millions of dollars a year. Many of these older aircraft, because of structural integrity, safety concerns, will never fly again. Yet we require them to be maintained in operational status for that last flight to the junkyard.

Between 2000 and 2007, retirement restrictions cost the Air Force $893 million, and almost $143 million has gone to modify aircraft the Air Force would like to retire. This year, the Air Force will spend $8.1 million to maintain the aircraft in flyable storage, $8.1 million to maintain aircraft that will never be used again. This will happen year after year.

There has been some political pressure to keep this because some maintenance happens in different States where various Senators and Congressmen want that to continue.

My amendment will just give the Air Force the flexibility to retire aircraft that needs to be retired. Most Americans would think that is just basic common sense, and I hope we can agree on that in the Senate.

I hope we can get back to the debate on this Defense authorization bill. I am very sorry that the majority will not let us move to the cloture vote on the Levin amendment, which is pending. But if we need to talk through the night, we will continue to talk through the night.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. LEVIN. Will the Senator yield for a unanimous consent request?

Ms. MIKULSKI. Yes.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after the Senator from Maryland finishes her remarks, then on the Republican side, I understand Senator WARNER will be the next speaker, and then that Senator SCHUMER be recognized on our side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CORNYN. Reserving the right to object, and I will not object, I would just like to add Senator BUNNING after Senator SCHUMER, if I may.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank my friend from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I am glad we got one of them. Maybe we can start a momentum here.

Mr. President, I never thought I would see the day in the Senate when there would be essentially a gag rule on the subject of war, essentially a gag rule preventing us from voting on the deployment of our troops and a framework for them to be able to come home. We are supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body, but the other party has chosen to throw sand in the gears to give us a vote where we would present a framework.

The previous speaker talked about that we Democrats present a strategy du jour on the war. I challenge that statement and say it is the White House that gives us a strategy du jour, a strategy of the week, always changing goals. When the war was originally voted for, it was to get rid of Saddam Hussein and get rid of weapons of mass destruction. Saddam is gone and there were no weapons of mass destruction. If that was the goal of the war, come back home. Then it was to create democracy in Iraq. Now it is to secure Baghdad. It is a goal and a strategy du jour.

We have to come up with the right kind of framework, but we also need to be able to offer our votes. Mr. President, 47 times this year the Republican minority has threatened a filibuster on a variety of bills that we want to bring up on both domestic and foreign policy; 47 times they have threatened a filibuster, and now they have gone too far. Now the other party refuses to give us a vote on the most important issue we face: the war in Iraq and the deployment of our troops.

Our President talks about building a democratic Iraq. We should start with building democracy right here in the Senate.

Democracy is built on fundamental principles. One of the fundamental principles is freedom of speech, but not in the Senate. We are in a gag rule. We face strong-arm tactics to prevent our vote on a troop deadline.

Another fundamental principle of democracy is majority rule, but not in the Senate. It now takes 60 votes to win a vote. The reason we objected to the cloture is to end the filibuster. But we want to end the war, and that is why our unanimous consent request is a direct vote on that point. They want to hide behind parliamentary procedure. We want to go directly to the point.

Our Constitution calls for a system of checks and balances, but that is not what the White House wants. They want us to write the checks, but tonight we are trying to provide the balance. That is why we stand here the way we do.

Some people say Democrats are micromanaging the war. Well, hey, someone has to manage it, and it is about time. For the last 5 years, Congress has been under the rule of the other party. It has been a rubberstamp for the Bush administration. The results have been devastating to our military, to America's standing in the world, to the Iraqi people. We had troops sent to battle with inadequate protection and no plan for victory. We had modest international support, and now that is dwindling. Our former Secretary of Defense was imperious and turned a blind eye to cronyism and corruption at every level of the reconstruction.

You know what, it is time for someone to manage the war, and we are ready to do it. We are ready to lead. We just need to have a vote.

It is time to stop talking, it is time for action, and it is time for the Senate to have its say and its day on an actual vote.

This isn't about theater, it is not about polls, and it is not about politics. It is about the will of the American people. It is about honoring democratic principles. It is about doing the job we were elected to do.

I support the bipartisan amendment of Levin, Reed, and Hagel and other Republicans because it begins the process of bringing our troops home. But it not only brings them home, it brings them home safely and swiftly.

The Iraqis must understand the future of their nation is now in their hands, and our troops have to understand that the Congress is with them and we want to be with them when they are on the battlefield and when they come home. We believe the best way to support our troops is to create a framework to bring them home swiftly and safely.

There are those who want to talk about alternatives. There are those who are blocking the vote on this amendment saying it is too soon to withdraw. They have suddenly discovered the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, something I supported 7 months ago, 210 days ago.

Mr. President, 210 days ago, the Iraq Study Group gave us a framework. They called it a way forward. They had 79 recommendations. I stood on this floor and said out of the 79, certainly there were 60 on which we could agree. Let's have a meeting, let's pick our favorite 60, and let's start moving forward on a military solution, a political solution, a diplomatic solution, but a solution it would be.

It was dismissed. It was dismissed by the other party, the other side of the wall, the other side of the aisle—it seems like a wall sometimes—and it was dismissed by the President of the United States.

So now all of a sudden they found the Iraq Study Group. Seven months ago that Iraq Study Group did call for diplomatic and political efforts. I think we make those efforts, and I also think that is included in the spirit and substance of Levin-Reed-Hagel-Snowe and others amendment.

Now is the day that we should refocus our mission in Iraq and also follow the path forward that was recommended and have our troops home by April 1, 2008. We know the Levin-Reed-Hagel, et al, amendment directs the Secretary of Defense to begin reducing the number of U.S. forces in Iraq no later than 120 days to begin those important diplomatic and political strategies. And it also leaves U.S. forces there for three missions: protecting other U.S. troops, completing the training of Iraq troops, and engaging in targeted counterterrorism operations. But it also requires them to complete it by April 30, 2008. This is what I advocate.

I am not new to this position. I never wanted to go to war in the first place. You see, I read all those intelligence reports, and I never believed that the President should be granted unilateral authority to engage in a war where there was no imminent threat to the United States of America. I was one of 23. Four years ago on October 11, I opposed the President giving this authority and asked that we exhaust our diplomatic options, asked us to stick with the U.N., and I said: I am just so concerned that I don't know if our troops will be met with a parade or a landmine. We know where we are. So off we went. We went to war with Iraq, and now we are at war within Iraq. Saddam is gone, but we are still there mired in a civil war.

No one could ask more of our troops. They have been brave, they have been courageous, and they have followed the request of their Commander in Chief. We need to look out for them. I believe we will. Other aspects of this bill, particularly the Wounded Warriors Act, look out for the veterans who have been injured, look out by reforming the disability benefits system, look out for the health care they need from the VA.

It is time for a new direction. It is time for us to have this vote. It is time for the Iraqi elected officials to stand up. Twelve Members of the 38–Member Parliament no longer attend Cabinet meetings; 75 Members of the Iraqi Parliament are boycotting their own Parliament so that they cannot get a quorum to do their job, whether it is for oil revenue sharing or power sharing.

I think it is time now, I think it is time for us to have a vote. I think it is time to refocus the mission. I think it is time to redeploy our troops. I think it is time to bring our troops home by April 30, 2008. And that is why I think it is time to vote on the Levin-Reed amendment.

So, Mr. President, I therefore, ask unanimous consent that amendment No. 2088 be withdrawn and that at 8:30 p.m. today, the Senate vote on the Levin-Reed amendment No. 2087 with the time, in all fairness, equally divided on both sides in the usual format, and no second-degree amendments be in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BUNNING. I object.

Mr. WARNER. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am so sorry to hear that objection. But I have now concluded my remarks for this part of the evening and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. I thank the Presiding Officer. Mr. President, I am given an opportunity now, which I have been looking forward to, to have a little colloquy with my long-time friend, Senator LEVIN, now chairman of the committee, and address one or two issues to explain why I feel very strongly that I have to oppose this amendment.

Just 49 days ago, the President signed into law an appropriations bill which contained legislative language, which legislative language originated on the floor of the Senate. I was privileged to be a part of the drafting of that language, and it eventually has become now the law of the land. I would like to review some of the points we put in that language which is the law.

It, first, requires the President to come forward on July 15, which he did. He submitted an assessment of the benchmarks. It further directed that General Petraeus be here in September with Ambassador Crocker. It further called upon the new organization which was created in this most recent appropriations bill, again originating, this part of the legislation, on the floor of the Senate. We put together a requirement that there be an independent study group of the Iraq security forces.

We have periodically through the years received reports from the Department of Defense describing how many battalions of the Iraqi forces are trained, how many are equipped, how many are ready to take the point by themselves, how many are dependent on U.S. forces. That is quite an accumulation of data. I felt very strongly, and other colleagues did, that we wanted to have a report independent of the Department of Defense, and that report performed by individuals who had many years of experience assessing the capabilities of men and women in uniform.

How fortunate we were that the former Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Jones, offered to head that group. He formed a group of fellow officers, most of them three and four stars now retired, who likewise have had years of experience and training in evaluating our Armed Forces. And they added two police chiefs. They just finished this past weekend. They returned on Saturday from a 1-week trip to Iraq to study the forces.

Part of the law requires that they come forward with a report. And I am pleased to say, having consulted with General Jones, that report will be available early in September, such that the President, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and others can take it into consideration as they formulate the sequential requirement of the President to come forth and report to America, the Congress, and his people his opinion of the situation in Iraq as of September 15 of this year.

It is for that reason that I believe we should hold in place additional legislation at this time until the President has had the opportunity, that Congress has had the opportunity, and, most importantly, the American people have had the opportunity to study all of these facts provided by the professionals.

I would like to also add that the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace, has also stated he will have a report, his own assessment, of the situation over there, and his assessment of the Iraq security forces; that is, both military and police, prepared for that September timeframe. So that is the focal point.

I say with deep respect to my colleague, Senator LEVIN, chairman of the committee, which I am proud to have served on now 29 years with Senator LEVIN, side by side, that it seems to me we have passed a law where we put in the process by which America would proceed to the 15th of September, at which time the President will report to the Nation about such changes as he deems—the President, as Commander in Chief, exercising his clear authority under the Constitution, to change or revise the strategy and how our forces will be implemented in the future.

Later this evening, perhaps when I have further time, I will address the Warner-Lugar amendment, which goes into some detail about our recommendations to the President—I repeat: recommendations. Not directing him as a matter of law—on that report on 15 September; to include certain items in it. But the point I wish to make is I feel that if the Senate were to adopt, by way of a vote—which now requires 60 votes—the Levin amendment, it would be in contravention to the very spirit, letter, and purpose of the law that this body adopted 49 days ago. That would bring about confusion in the minds of the troops, confusion in the minds of the world.

How can America take such a zigzag course in legislation at such a critical time in our history, while trying to provide the Iraqi people with a stable situation so they can have some measurable quality of life and freedom and move ahead and hopefully have a nation that will join other nations in the world in our struggle against terrorism? That is my main concern.

I also point out that my good friend, Senator LEVIN, voted for the Cornyn amendment, which we adopted this morning, and among the findings are, as follows: The Cornyn amendment, which Senator LEVIN and I, and 90-some other Senators supported, stated:

> A failed state in Iraq would become a safe haven for Islamic radicals, including al Qaeda.

We read today in the National Intelligence Estimate addressing the potential of al-Qaida and how so much of that potential is directed, clearly, at the United States.

The Cornyn amendment also said:

> The Iraq Study Group report found that ''(a) chaotic Iraq—

should we have a precipitous pullout—

> could provide a still stronger base of operations for terrorists who seek to act regionally or even globally.''

Further, the Cornyn amendment recited:

> A National Intelligence Estimate concluded that the consequences of a premature withdrawal from Iraq would be that—(A) Al Qaeda would attempt to use Anbar province to plan further attacks outside of Iraq; (B) neighboring countries would consider actively intervening in Iraq; and (C) sectarian violence would significantly increase in Iraq, accompanied by massive civilian casualties and displacement.

Now, I read that because my valued friend, Senator LEVIN, appeared last night on a national program, the Jim Lehrer show, and he was asked repeatedly in that interview about how he would envision an Iraq having to experience a withdrawal timetable, which is fixed in his amendment. How would Iraq be, once that timetable went into effect and those troops would withdraw? I read through very carefully the transcript, which I have here, and I cannot find in there the specific references, much like what was in the Cornyn amendment. It seems to me there might be some disconnect between what you said publicly last night and the document to which you attached your vote in support today.

So I would like to entertain a colloquy and have my good friend explain how he envisions what the consequences to Iraq would be should his amendment be law eventually. We would first have to pass it here and then it would have to go to a conference with the House and then survive and become a part of the conference report.

Mr. LEVIN. If I can respond to my good friend's question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. We know what we hope will happen, and there are some things we can predict that will happen.

What do we know? We know that Iraq is in chaos. We know that the Iraqi President, or Prime Minister more accurately, has said the only way to end the bloodletting of innocents in Iraq is if the Iraqi leaders reach a political settlement. We know that. We know there is no military solution in Iraq. We know there is only a political solution and that the violence cannot end unless Iraqi leaders reach a political settlement.

I think those are consensus points. Those are things we know. We know how many of our troops have been killed and how many are killed every

month and how many are wounded and come home. We know those things.

Then the question is: Since there is no military solution, there is only a political solution—that is the only hope of succeeding in Iraq—how do you promote a political settlement in Iraq? Is the current course we are on succeeding or do we need to change the course?

We all have the same goal. We all want to maximize the chances of success in Iraq. If you believe we are succeeding in Iraq now, then you vote to stay the course. If you believe after all these years and all these deaths and all these wounded and all these expenditures, now over $10 billion a month, that we need to change course because we are not succeeding in Iraq, you have to ask yourself: How do we change course? How do we change what is going on in Iraq?

So those are the things that we, each of us, I think in our own conscience, are trying to figure what is the best way to maximize the chances of success in Iraq. I believe the only hope in getting the Iraqi leaders to reach the political settlement, which everybody agrees is the only hope, is to force them to accept responsibility for their own nation, to work out the political differences on revenue-sharing, on elections, on debaathification amendments, and on constitutional changes.

They have been dithering for years. They made a promise to their people, to the American people, and to the world last year. It is on their Web site, 16 of their benchmarks—not ours, their benchmarks. They have not carried out the commitments they have made. There was a timetable attached to those benchmarks. I put that timetable in the RECORD. It was part of a letter that Secretary Rice sent to me.

So we have a situation—

Mr. WARNER. Well, Mr. President, the amendment which I worked on and which went into the appropriations bill, those are the same benchmarks in that bill.

Mr. LEVIN. They are different.

Mr. WARNER. Well, they track, in large measure, the same.

Mr. LEVIN. Some are the same, some are different, but they are political benchmarks which the Iraqi leaders said they would meet. They made those benchmarks. We didn't impose them, those are their benchmarks. The letter from Secretary Rice makes it explicit that the Presidency Council, which represents all the factions in Iraq, formally adopted those benchmarks. They were supposed to have been adopted in October, November, December, January, and in February. They have not been met.

How are we going to get them to meet them, to keep an open-ended commitment, which is what the President wants us to do. Another delay and then patience. The President asks us to be patient? We should be downright impatient with the Iraqi leaders. The message to the Iraqi leaders shouldn't be, for heaven sakes, after all these casualties, that we are going to be patient with them when it is in their hands as to whether this civil strife is going to end.

Mr. WARNER. I would say to my colleague, the President, when he enunciated his new policy on January 10, the purpose was to lay a foundation of security such that the Iraqi Government could perform in a manner given that the security is very serious in Iraq.

Even though I had misgivings about the surge, I put those aside once the President had made a decision to go forward. I wish to support the troops, and they are carrying out this mission. I think there is a strong chance there will be some measure of achievement of the surge militarily.

I agree with my colleague, the performance of the Iraqi Government to date has been extraordinarily disappointing. I have stated that on this floor a number of times, as have other colleagues. But the point I wish to urge is that if we were to take—tomorrow, for example—and begin to change the intentions of the Senate, which were expressed in law 49 days ago, and suddenly announce a withdrawal program, as the distinguished Senator from Michigan has in his amendment, it would be perceived as an undercut to the very military operation we are trying to bring about now.

Why can't we wait until September, until the President has had the benefit of all the convergence of this information, and then, as a body, review his remarks and statements and possibly change the strategy subsequent to the 15th of September? Because I do believe that your amendment is in conflict with what we did 49 days ago.

Mr. LEVIN. If the Senator will yield for an answer.

Mr. WARNER. Yes.

Mr. LEVIN. I think the Senate spoke also prior to adopting your amendment. We voted 51 to 48, adopted an amendment which said we will begin to reduce our forces and to transition to the new mission, and that we would begin that transition within 120 days. That was vetoed by the President.

Mr. WARNER. That is correct.

Mr. LEVIN. The Senate spoke even before it adopted the amendment of the Senator from Virginia. So we have spoken in many ways over the years. But now it is our belief, those of us who support this amendment, that the earlier we put pressure on the Iraqi leaders to reach a political solution, which everybody agrees is the only hope, the earlier we put that pressure on them, the better.

Mr. WARNER. Well, Mr. President, the distinguished ranking member, Mr. MCCAIN, in his remarks of this morning, made it very clear that the President made it very clear, if we proceed with the course of adopting your amendment, then there will be another veto, and then we are back into that sequence and a veto on a bill which you and I have worked on for these 29 years.

How many times have we been on the floor supporting the annual authorization bill? We have gotten a bill each of those 29 years that we have been on that committee. This will be the first time a President was compelled to veto it because he is repeating his actions he took earlier, 2 months ago.

Mr. LEVIN. I think the Senator is well aware this President is not compelled to veto anything. As a matter of fact, the report the Senator refers to, which is due in September, will be coming in before this bill gets to the President. At least there is some hope the President will see what the Republican leader in the Senate saw a month ago. It was the Senator from Kentucky who a couple of months ago said: The handwriting is on the wall. There is going to be a change of course in September.

Now, why wait? We are losing men and women, our best and our brightest, our bravest, every day in Iraq. Those who return wounded will have a lifetime of recovery in many cases. We have record numbers of problems that have come up—post-traumatic stress disorder, we have traumatic brain injuries which are plaguing our troops who survive. Thank God we have great medical care on the battlefield. Why wait until September? The Republican leader said the handwriting is on the wall. There is going to be a change of course in September. There should be a change of course, not just in September, it should have changed a long time ago. But there is no way to change this course unless the leaders of Iraq do what only they can do, what their own Prime Minister said had to happen before the bloodletting of innocents ends in Iraq. They and they alone have it in their hands to work out the political settlement, which, according to their own agreement, was supposed to have been reached months ago.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, the Senator is correct, that Government has not performed. But we, 49 days ago, structured a careful sequence of events between now and September to make certain the information, the facts, the opinions, the conclusions which would guide the President in that revision of strategy the distinguished Senator MCCONNELL made observation about some time ago, that information is converging at that very point in time.

I say to the Senator, we are so close. I would not want to see the Congress disrupt what it has already enacted and put it into law as to what is to take place in September. It is for that reason I simply cannot support my distinguished colleague from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank my friend, and I don't view this at all as personal.

A matter of fact, we had this interim report on July 15. What did it come in and say? It came in and said, on the political side, nothing has happened in Iraq; and on the political side, we see no advances. But the political side is

where the advances have to take place. As a matter of fact, the President said, when he came up with this surge policy, that the purpose of the surge was to give the political leaders an opportunity to reach a political settlement.

Well, they have had that opportunity, they haven't done it, and the surge has not accomplished anything in the area of a political settlement.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I will conclude my time and yield the floor because other colleagues sequentially are participating. Perhaps we will be able to reopen this colloquy at another time during the debate. But I certainly share with you the enormity of loss of life, the loss of limb, of the hardships of the military families. Even those families who fortunately have not suffered loss of life or limb nevertheless have repeated tours of duty and separations from their loved ones brought on by this war.

But I am concerned we might lose all of that which has been given if we make the wrong decision now and precipitously fix a date for pullout. All that sacrifice might be lost. I am certain my colleague shares with me that one of the goals we should have in this situation is to make certain those losses were not in vain.

Mr. LEVIN. If the Senator will yield, I think we all share that view, but the amendment, if it is anything, it is not precipitous. This is coming after a great deal of debate. We have had a vote on this. The Senate voted to do something very similar to this, and it was vetoed.

We have a 120-day period to begin to reduce forces. That is not precipitous. That gives the Iraqis notice, now 4 months more notice after enactment, which can't come for many months, that they have to begin to get their political act together.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, my time is nearly up. It may not be enacted for 4 or 5 months, but the signal will go out of this Chamber, if we adopt your amendment, that the Senate, in less than 40 days, has changed the law that it passed a short time ago, and it looks like a zigzag course that this Nation is taking in one of the most serious situations in my lifetime—this situation in the Middle East. It is essential to our security that area of the world not implode.

I yield the floor to the other Senators who are scheduled to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from New York is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Well, I thank the Chair, and this is a historic night. The Senate will stay in session all night to debate the war in Iraq, something we should be doing. Frankly, Mr. President, we should have done it a while ago.

The bottom line is we need debate and to focus attention on Iraq. We need to change the course in Iraq. We need to bring an end to having American soldiers police, patrol, be wounded, maimed, and killed, as they are in the midst of this civil war not of our country's making.

The bottom line is this. We are here to debate the one true resolution that will force the President to change course in Iraq. Many of us, sadly, and with some degree of frustration, believe the President will not change course. Many of us believe the facts on the ground are not apparent to him or, if they are, do not enter into his decision. The view that military strength, and military strength alone, can prevail in Iraq is wrong. The facts do not measure up. The Shia, the Sunni, the Kurds have had age-old enmity. If I had to sum up the problem with the President's policy in a sentence, I would say this: The Shias, the Sunnis, the Kurds dislike each other far more than they might like any central government of Iraq.

In a certain sense, what we are trying to do here is to take two ''norths'' on a magnet and try to push them together. The minute we release our hands they will push apart. Those are the facts on the ground that cannot be avoided.

We can add another 20,000 troops or another 40,000 troops and might get some degree of pacification for a period of time. As soon as we leave, whether it is in 3 months or 3 years, the Sunnis, the Shiites, the Kurds, and the various factions will be fighting with one another once again.

There is indeed—and I will elaborate—there is indeed a need to protect ourselves from terrorism that might generate from the chaos in Iraq. That does not require 160,000 troops patrolling the streets of Baghdad. Most of what our soldiers do—bravely, gallantly, with great dedication to their country, but unfortunately—most of what our soldiers do has absolutely nothing to do with fighting terrorism. Yet we continue to send them back and then back again and then back again.

I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, particularly those who have stated that the present policy is misguided, and even those who probably think it is misguided but don't want to say it out of loyalty to the leader of their party, will take a bold step and join us in supporting the Levin-Reed amendment. All of the other amendments are flawed, in my judgment, because they are advisory. This President will not take advice unless forced to change course. If it doesn't happen now, it will happen in September or October. It will happen. We all know that at some point there will be a group of Republican Senators who will quietly go to the White House and say: Mr. President, unless you change direction in Iraq we will change it for you.

If that is going to happen in 2 or 3 months—and the whispers on the other side of the aisle indicate that is what will happen—why wait? Why sacrifice more life and see so many more soldiers coming home wounded? Why sacrifice the billions of dollars that we are spending at the same time our schools need so much help and our health care system needs so much help? Our energy policy needs redirection.

We live in a changing world. Technology has changed everything about our world. It has created terrorism. Terrorism is a real force. I disagree with those who say we can ignore the fact that terrorism is real. Technology has empowered small groups of bad people and given them the ability to strike at us in our heartland. That is brand new. There have always been small groups of bad people. There have even been large groups of bad people. But they didn't have the ability to hurt us.

The Japanese war machine in 1941, while America slept, could only get as far as Pearl Harbor, and that was a long reach. Yet the several thousand in al-Qaida, far less wealthy and far less strong, were able to strike at the World Trade Center in my city. So terrorism is real. Terrorism is something that we have to fight against.

The problem in the equation that the President speaks about and believes in, that so many on the other side of the aisle speak about and believe in, is that what we are doing in Iraq, it is almost impossible to prove has much to do with terror.

They say al-Qaida might set up camps in Iraq and use those camps as they use the camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan to try and hurt us. That may be true. But what does having our soldiers patrol the streets of Baghdad, or Diyala, or Ramadi or any of the other cities to prevent various tribes and ethnic groups from fighting one another, have to do with that? What does trying—futilely, in my opinion—to buttress the Maliki government have to do with that, when the Maliki government is incapable of doing elementary things, let alone containing al-Qaida?

This war in Iraq has just veered out of control, and a great leader would say that and change course. Without casting aspersions on what brought us there—although we can debate that all day long; whatever happened in the past happened. But the facts on the ground are real. To just about anyone who looks at this with an unbiased eye, what we are doing in Iraq has very little to do with protecting us and, in fact, a good argument can be made it makes things worse every day we stay. Certainly the argument can be made it delays the inevitable, which will happen, which is that the Iraqis are going to have to work out for themselves how they are going to live or not live together, given the age-old enmities.

Yet this President persists. It is not good for the Iraqi people. It is not good for the American people. It is not good for the country that he does. Our job is to require the President to change because he will not do it on his own.

That is why, while I have great respect for my colleague from Colorado and for my colleague from Virginia and

my colleague from Indiana, I don't think their resolutions are what is needed because the President will not change. He knows what our opinion is. He knows what the American people's view of this war is. He doesn't need a resolution to suggest to him to change course. No. He needs to be required to do it. He needs to be forced to do it.

That is the stark choice we face tonight. That is where we are tonight. If you believe that we must change course in Iraq, the only resolution that does that is Levin-Reed.

One other thing: This country needs to do so much. The very technology I talked about, which effects terrorism and creates terrorism, creates other challenges for America. Our schools—when the OEDC ranks the 21 developed countries in terms of their K–12 education—now come out 12th, the bottom half. In math we come out 15th. We are doing virtually nothing to improve our schools, which to me is the ultimate answer to preserve the American economy and American jobs.

Our health care system is broken. There are 45 million people uncovered and many more who are not covered very well. We have a system that doesn't do the basic preventive things that would save lives and save dollars.

On energy we send $1 billion a day overseas to many people we don't like, and we can't get hold of it and change it. Our foreign policy itself needs a new direction where we are able to take on terrorists who might hurt us in a way that develops world consensus. The rest of the world is learning what terrorism is like and why it is evil. We need to change our military to be able to do that. We need to change our foreign policy arrangements to do it.

All of these things and so many more—our infrastructure and our culture are lost because everything in this administration is focused on the misguided policy in Iraq.

The damage and danger of what is done hurts Iraq and it hurts America's reputation in the world. It also hurts us at home because we are spending time and energy and resources on something that just cannot work the way it is. What the Levin-Reed resolution recommends is that we withdraw the vast majority of our troops. We don't abandon Iraq altogether because we know al-Qaida might set up camps, and we know there is a need for some troops—mainly out of harm's way—to protect us from al-Qaida camps that might help train those who might strike at us. But the Levin-Reed resolution would not entail 160,000 troops in harm's way, because they are not needed. There might be 10,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 troops, mostly out of harm's way, that could protect us from terrorism.

The view that we can train the Iraqis to take over—many of us have lost faith in that. We have heard promise after promise that we should let the Iraqis take over. They don't really want to fight this war because when there is very little loyalty to a central government, it is very hard to build an army in a divided nation.

Many of the other amendments that are before us, in my judgment, are wishful thinking. They believe they will get the President to see the light. I wish that were the case. The President seems adamant. I don't think he will change unless he is forced to change. I don't think he will change unless this body meets its responsibilities and stands up and requires a change.

The President in February said we should wait until the summer. In April he said September. Now we are hearing from some of the commanders: Oh, no, we will have to wait until January.

It is just not working. We pacify one area and violence erupts in another. If we go to that area, then the area that was pacified creates the violence. Temporarily dealing with that violence doesn't solve the fundamental facts on the ground. Therefore, we need change. I do not believe this is an issue of hawks or doves. I think whichever you are, the simple facts on the ground dictate that we should change, and only Levin-Reed has us do that.

I salute my colleagues, the Senator from Michigan and the Senator from Rhode Island, for putting together this resolution. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle in particular to join with us. You will be joining with us later if you don't join with us today. That is the simple fact of the matter. I hope the Levin-Reed amendment is given its due. I hope it will pass for the sake of Iraq, the sake of our soldiers, the sake of America.

With that, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator BUNNING be allowed to speak until 8:35 and that the majority leader be recognized immediately thereafter.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCAIN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask my colleague, does that mean we will be voting after the recognition of the majority leader?

Mr. SCHUMER. Probably, yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LEVIN. Reserving the right to object, could we add that the next Democratic speaker will be Senator FEINSTEIN?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Reserving the right to object, could we have the next Republican speaker be Senator ALEXANDER?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Who seeks recognition? Under the previous order, the Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I rise tonight to play my small part in this pointless political play put on by the Senate majority leader. It is an insult to the brave men and women in our Armed Forces and to the American taxpayer that we are here tonight for no other reason than for a publicity stunt. Instead of following the script written by MoveOn, like my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, I want to be honest and frank with the American people.

I hear Democrats every day talk about public opinion polls on Iraq and on the President's approval rating. To some extent they are right. The American people are not satisfied with the war in Iraq and the President is at an all-time low in his approval rating.

But I rarely hear my friends on the other side of the aisle talk about public opinion polls of Congress. It is obvious why. President Bush has a higher approval rating than the current democratically led Congress. I have never been accused of being a political strategist, but I have been around this town long enough—over 21 years—to know that the American people resent their leaders for so often taking the politically expedient path instead of doing what they think is right.

The American people see right through this charade going on tonight. It is more political theater: phony images of cots, toothpaste, and sleepy politicians, meant to convince people that what goes on here at 3 in the morning may actually do some good. But it doesn't do any good.

In fact, it does a lot of bad. Because this debate is more about a political show and placating the ''MoveOn'' folks, than it is about talking about the real issue at hand. It is appalling that we use a bill that provides vital funding of our Nation's military as a political smokescreen for Democrats to gain points in the polls.

The safety and security of the brave men and women in our Armed Forces is not a game to me. Our troops should never be used as a basis to stage a cheap political stunt. If the Senate truly supported our troops, we would be here debating the nuts and bolts of the Department of Defense authorization bill. Instead, we find ourselves back debating whether to cut and run from Iraq, as we have done countless times before tonight.

Democrats would like for you to believe that Republicans will not vote on the Reed-Levin amendment. Give me a break. I am happy to vote on the amendment right now. I plan to oppose it, as I have opposed a similar version Senator LEVIN offered 2 months ago.

It is a bad amendment. It calls for a premature withdrawal of American troops from Iraq before we have even had a chance to see the results of the surge. I wish to know how some of my colleagues know that the surge has already failed when it has only been in place for a month?

I wish to know how they know the situation in Iraq better than our commanders on the ground? The ink is not even dry on the President's plan and

Democrats are already declaring it a failure. This type of defeatist strategy is irrational and unfair.

It is important to remember the dangerous effect our debate in Washington can have on the message we are sending our enemies. Make no mistake about it, our enemies are watching us. They are watching us and using our debate on the war in Iraq to strengthen themselves. This morning, the new National Intelligence Estimate declared the United States is at an elevated threat level. It said our biggest threat is al-Qaida, specifically al-Qaida in Iraq.

This group is working to mobilize other extremist organizations in the region to mount a new attack against the United States. The report also found that al-Qaida will continue to acquire chemical, biological or nuclear materials for attacks; it will not hesitate to use them.

While al-Qaida is working to plan this attack, U.S. forces are working hand in hand with Iraqi security forces to break up this organization and root it out and root this terrorist network out.

This work is vital to our national security. We cannot forget the important lessons we learned from the tragedies of 9/11. There are still those out there who wish to do us harm. Wake up America. If we withdrew from Iraq, the terrorists will likely follow us home.

Democrats would like for us to believe we can responsibly leave Iraq and the conflict will end. This is delusional. Make no mistake, if we leave Iraq prematurely, there will be widespread chaos in the Middle East. Iran will work with Syria to dominate the region, while Sunni States scramble to oppose them. They will use any means possible to acquire the resources to bolster their nuclear weapons program in an effort to combat and conquer the United States.

The Kurds in Iran will form their own country, possibly with the Kurds in Turkey, Syria, and Iran. This could lead to an armed conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish Government. There will be widespread attacks to wipe out Israel and to topple the democratic Government of Lebanon. These pillars of democracy in the Middle East that once stood as an example for freedom within the region will crumble.

The Government of Iraq will fail, and there will be civil war within the country. This will result in massive civilian casualties and displacement. Most importantly, our national security will be in jeopardy. This afternoon, we passed, by a large majority, Senator CORNYN's amendment that said we should not leave a failed state in Iraq. It also said we should not pass any legislation that will undermine our military's ability to prevent a failed state in Iraq.

I ask my colleagues: What are we doing right now? We are debating Senator LEVIN's amendment that will, without a doubt, result in a failed state in Iraq. Let me be clear to my colleagues that believe they can support both amendments. The strategy of cut and run will lead to a failed Iraq and will undermine our military's mission.

But Democrats have already decided the surge has failed before it has a chance to work. These are the same people who voted to overwhelmingly confirm General Petraeus and are now refusing to wait to hear his report in September. This is exactly the type of message our enemy wants to hear.

Well, I, for one, am working hard to send our enemies a different message: The United States will not back down from this fight. I stand behind our troops and General Petraeus. I promised in person, in my office, to General Petraeus, that I would wait to hear his report this fall. I intend to keep my promise. I urge my colleagues to do the same. The safety and security of all Americans depends on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the surge has now been going for 6 months. More than 600 Americans have been killed, thousands have been wounded, costing our country $60 billion.

The National Intelligence Estimate which was issued today—was leaked by someone last week—is very clear: There are two al-Qaidas now; there used to be one. There is al-Qaida in Iraq, totally separate and apart from the other al-Qaida that bin Laden led.

Where did it come from? It came from the worst foreign policy blunder in the history of our country, the invasion of Iraq.

My friend, the junior Senator from Kentucky, should understand, as a result of that invasion we now have a civil war raging in the Palestinian areas of Lebanon, the country of Israel has been basically ignored during this administration, and we have Iran thumbing their nose at us.

For the information of my friend from Kentucky, there would not be a civil war in Iraq, there already is one. It is an intractable civil war. We Americans are there in spite of the fact that the Iraqis, by an almost 70 percent margin, 69 percent to be exact, say we are doing more harm than good; they want us out of there.

The Prime Minister of Iraq said 3 days ago that he could do fine without us. Anytime we want to leave, his security would take over.

Now, wake up America? America is awake. They understand very clearly we have a situation where we have a President that will be in office only another 17 months, and they want the war to end before he leaves office. They want to change the course in Iraq which has caused the deaths of almost 3,700 Americans, the wounding of tens of thousands of Americans, cost us over half a trillion dollars.

That is what Americans want. They are awake.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative proceeded to call the roll, and the following Senators entered the Chamber and answered to their names:

[Quorum No. 4 Leg.]

Alexander	Durbin	Mikulski
Bennett	Feingold	Murray
Brown	Feinstein	Reid
Bunning	Kerry	Sanders
Cardin	Kyl	Sessions
Casey	Landrieu	Stabenow
Chambliss	Levin	Tester
Cornyn	McCain	Warner
Crapo	McConnell	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. A quorum is not present.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move that the Sergeant at Arms be directed to request the attendance of absent Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion of the Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion of the Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID, to direct the Sergeant at Arms to request the attendance of absent Senators. On this question, the yeas and nays have been ordered, and the clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUYE), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA), and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. LOTT).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 44, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 249 Leg.]

YEAS—44

Akaka	Feingold	Murray
Baucus	Feinstein	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Harkin	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Kennedy	Pryor
Boxer	Kerry	Reed
Brown	Klobuchar	Reid
Cantwell	Kohl	Salazar
Cardin	Landrieu	Sanders
Carper	Lautenberg	Schumer
Casey	Leahy	Stabenow
Clinton	Levin	Tester
Conrad	Lincoln	Webb
Dodd	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Dorgan	Menendez	Wyden
Durbin	Mikulski	

NAYS—47

Alexander	Barrasso	Bond
Allard	Bennett	Brownback

Bunning	Enzi	Murkowski
Burr	Graham	Roberts
Chambliss	Grassley	Sessions
Coburn	Gregg	Shelby
Coleman	Hagel	Smith
Collins	Hatch	Snowe
Corker	Hutchison	Specter
Cornyn	Isakson	Stevens
Craig	Kyl	Sununu
Crapo	Lieberman	Thune
DeMint	Lugar	Vitter
Dole	Martinez	Voinovich
Domenici	McCain	Warner
Ensign	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—9

Biden	Inhofe	Lott
Byrd	Inouye	Obama
Cochran	Johnson	Rockefeller

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, our Democratic friends thought they were going to teach Republicans a lesson today on how to proceed in Iraq. Instead, Americans got an object lesson on why Democrats have failed to accomplish any of their goals over the last 7 months.

As to this fanciful notion that we have never had 60-vote thresholds on votes, Democrats agreed just this year to 60-vote thresholds on at least five Iraq-related votes: the Reid sense of the Congress on Iraq, the Murray sense of the Congress on Iraq, the Gregg sense of the Congress on Iraq, the Hagel amendment to H.R. 1585 relating to deployment time, and the Graham amendment to H.R. 1585 relating to deployment time—at least five Iraq votes that have been subject to 60 votes.

Now, Republicans have repeatedly offered Democrats an opportunity to have a vote on the Levin amendment according to the traditional 60-vote threshold. Democrats themselves have insisted on 60-vote thresholds for judges, for example. We could have had the vote this morning and moved on to other business, like finishing this very important underlying bill and getting the men and women in the military what they need and deserve.

What is at stake, Mr. President? Iraq's Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, recently told reporters:

> The dangers could be a civil war, dividing the country, regional wars, and the collapse of the state.

The same sentiment has been echoed recently by political figures from the Sunni Arab community, which had been the least supportive of the U.S. presence after the collapse of Saddam's Sunni-dominated government.

Foreign Minister Zebari has also credited multinational forces for keeping Turkey from occupying northern Iraq. This is what he recently had to say:

> Tomorrow, another country will set its sights on Iraq—Iran, Syria, and others have certain interests, ambitions, and interferences. Ironically, it is this presence that is preserving Iraq's unity; this deterrent is preventing the outbreak of an all-out sectarian civil war, and perhaps regional wars as well.

Now, the National Intelligence Estimate released today said al-Qaida will ''leverage the contacts and capabilities of al-Qaida in Iraq, its most visible and capable affiliate and the only one known to have expressed a desire to attack us here in the United States.''

Yesterday, the U.N. Secretary General, Ban Kimoon, warned that an abrupt withdrawal may, ''lead to a further deterioration of the situation in Iraq.''

Now, what do the terrorists themselves say? What do they say, the terrorists themselves?

The Islamic State of Iraq announced during our last debate in April that certain members of Congress had declared the War in Iraq hopeless.

Those are the words of the terrorists themselves. And here is Osama bin Laden himself, quoted from an Al Jazeera broadcast last April. This is what Osama bin Laden said:

> The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate rule. They keep reiterating success in Baghdad will be success for the U.S., failure in Iraq the failure of the U.S. Their defeat in Iraq will mean defeat in all of their wars and the beginning to the receding of their Zionist-Crusader tide against us.

That is from the lips of Osama bin Laden.

Now, our Democratic friends have tried to have it both ways on Iraq for too long. They voted to send General Petraeus to Iraq by a unanimous vote, even as many of them undercut his mission and the morale of our troops by declaring it a failure. They voted to fund that mission even after working for more than 3 months to undercut it through legislation that would render it impossible to carry out. And now they have taken the unprecedented step of hijacking a Defense authorization bill to undercut the framework they agreed to when they funded the mission back in May.

So let's take a look, my friends and colleagues, at what we agreed to back in May. The conference report that 80 Senators voted for in May required a benchmarks report in July and a report from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in September.

We chose July for the benchmarks report because the Baghdad Security Plan would be fully manned, and we wanted the Iraqi Government to know we expected their cooperation and sacrifice in exchange for ours. We chose September because that is when General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker planned to give the President an update on the counterinsurgency plan currently underway. We thought it reasonable that we get the same assessment to form an appropriate legislative response.

The Congress decided in May that 1 month of a fully manned surge was insufficient to call the Petraeus plan a failure. We wrote that decision into law. Since May, we have learned that progress is mixed. Many of the military tasks assigned have been achieved, and we have not seen sufficient progress on the political benchmarks. Some of our colleagues have refrained from calling for a change in strategy until they hear what General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have to say in September. Actually, there is really no good argument that Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus deserve an opportunity to be heard when these significant reports come out in September.

So I would ask our colleagues on the other side to think of the tangle we are in. Republicans have asked repeatedly to move up the cloture vote on the Levin troop withdrawal amendment. They have blocked us every time because they prefer the theater of the all-nighter. We were elected to legislate, not to strut across a stage. This isn't Hollywood. This is real life here in the Senate. Much depends on how we conduct ourselves right here and how we conduct ourselves in this debate.

We have heard the warnings from people who know the dangers that lurk in Iraq, and now I have a warning of my own to my colleagues on the other side. Our commanders, our troops, and the millions of brave men and women who have stood with us in Iraq and who live in danger of the creeping prospect of precipitous withdrawal, deserve a lot better than they are getting in this debate. They deserve our resolve and, at the very least, they deserve us to keep the pledge we made as recently as last May.

It is time to put an end to this charade. The stakes are entirely too high.

Mr. President, I yield the floor

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I sat here for the last hour or so and listened to the discussion, and what one concludes is that, once again, we are locked in a debate about the future of Iraq. I think many people watching this debate listen and think: Does this solve anything?

But in many ways, thanks to the courage of a few Senators on the other side of the aisle, the debate has undergone a major shift in the past few weeks. We are no longer simply asking whether we should change course, it is clear today that a majority in this body believe we must change course. Today, a majority of the Senate sees that the surge is not working, and a majority believes there has been no progress on political reconciliation.

The question I hear repeated is: Do we change course now or do we wait until September? I have heard distinguished Members of this body say: Why not wait until September? I believe the answer is clear. When you know things are moving in the wrong direction, why wait to act? And a growing majority in the Senate agrees.

While there are over 50-plus votes to support this view, there doesn't appear to be the 60 votes needed to bring the debate to a close, and there still are not the 67 votes needed to overcome a Presidential veto. So those of us who believe we need to change course, and

need to change course now, have no option other than to press for a vote until we prevail.

The good news is that this debate may slowly be moving away from the partisan bickering and toward a bipartisan way out of Iraq. A growing number of well-respected Republicans have made it clear that they believe the President's current strategy is not sustainable. This includes Senators WARNER and LUGAR, two of the most distinguished Senators in this body, who have introduced an amendment calling on the President to develop a plan to transition the mission, and potentially—potentially—draw down our troops.

This includes Senators HAGEL, SMITH, and SNOWE, who have cosponsored the Levin-Reed amendment calling for a binding timetable to redeploy our troops.

This includes Senator VOINOVICH, who, according to reports, has informed the White House that the only way to salvage the President's legacy is to begin moving out of Iraq.

And this includes Senators DOMENICI, COLLINS, ALEXANDER, BENNETT, GREGG, and SUNUNU, who have embraced legislation to implement the Iraq Study Group's recommendations.

These Senators are to be commended for their courage, and I believe the ranks will only continue to grow as time goes by. Why? Because despite repeated predictions that security and stability in Iraq are just around the corner, this has proved illusory. The security situation has not improved. There has been no progress toward political reconciliation. None.

Simply put: Violence in Iraq continues unabated, and we have heard it said on the floor over and over again, just in the past few days: 25 people killed Sunday, attacks across Baghdad, 10 killed in a car bomb blast in a busy commercial area, a triple bombing attack in Kirkuk killing 85 yesterday, wounding 183. And within hours of that attack, several men in Iraqi military uniforms attacked a Shia village in Diyala fatally shooting 28 men, women, and children.

This is why we need a change in course. And these are not isolated incidents. They are not the exception. They are the norm, day in, day out. Every day there is more—more bombings, more shootings, more IEDs, more kidnappings, more death squads.

Has the surge led to a reduction in violence? No. The news continues. We also heard last week of a firefight between U.S. forces and Iraqi police.

This cannot be the right direction. The surge wasn't supposed to be a silver bullet, but it was supposed to give the Iraqi Government the space and stability needed to come to a political accommodation. But has this happened? The answer has to be no. Is this likely to happen in the next 55 days? The answer is no.

In fact, the Iraqi Parliament will be taking a month-long vacation during this critical period. That is 30 out of the 55 days.

But of greatest concern is the fact that there has been little, if any, progress in the political arena. Even by the administration's account, the Iraqi Government hasn't made progress in meeting the benchmarks. You have heard this, and there are two more reports due on benchmarks, so we will hear more of the same.

If you talk about benchmarks, to me the most critical has always been debaathification—a terrible mistake made by us and now supported to continue by Ahmed Chalabi to prevent former Baathists from working. You can never have a united Iraq as long as you have debaathification on a level that even today still exists. The absence of holding provincial elections, passing an oil revenue sharing law, ensuring that authorities are not undermining members of the Iraqi security forces, ensuring that the Iraqi security forces provide evenhanded enforcement of the law—simple things not done.

There is a misbegotten belief that we can turn Iraq into a democracy—a country with little infrastructure for democracy, a government where ministers don't show up, where parliamentarians don't arrive, where long vacations are taken in the middle of war and strife. At the same time, the Pentagon reported last week that there has been a slight reduction in the number of Iraqi security force units capable of independent operations. So there is even deterioration on that front.

Yet we are told to wait. Something good might happen. So what should we do? Rather than wait another 8 weeks, I think we should act now. I think the Senate should approve the Levin-Reed amendment, which, to date, is the only amendment, as the majority leader has stated so often, with teeth—in 120 days redeployment begins, and out by April 30th of next year. It is clear, it is definitive, and it has the support of a majority of this body.

No State has suffered more than California from this war. We have nearly 400 dead and 3,000 wounded; 400 dead, 400 young men and women dead from the State. I hear some States say they have had five or six. We have had 400 people killed in this war. It is clear we must change course, but the President and some in this body say, again, we should wait.

Let me tell you why we should not wait. Here is what we will lose in 8 weeks, if current trends continue. Hundreds more U.S. troops dead. At this present rate, that is 200 more dead. More than 1,000 U.S. troops injured. Actually, if the present rate continues, 1,200 to 1,500 more. Several thousand more Iraqi civilians killed. At the present rate, 4,000 to 6,000 by waiting. Nearly 100,000 more Iraqi civilians displaced and another $20 billion spent.

I ask you, is this an acceptable cost of waiting? It is not to me. Secretary Gates and other administration officials made it clear in January we should know in a matter of months if the surge was working. Here it is July. It is very clear the surge is not working. Every day there are more bombings. If you measure things in real terms, that kill people—there are more bombings, more killings, more IEDs, more violence. Casualties have jumped since the surge began. As I said, we are now losing 100 of our people every month. The 331 troops killed during April, May, and June is the highest 3-month total since the war began 4½ years ago.

How is this a sign of progress? Tell me how is it a sign of progress, when more people are killed, more displaced, Iraqis turn up in the morgue by the dozens every day? Because if this trend continues, 2007 will be the deadliest for our troops since this war began. Why wait to act?

Waiting is not going to change the political situation either. Will we see the Iraqi Government pass an oil revenue-sharing law by September? Does anyone believe that? I don't think so.

Will we see reform of the debaathification system by September? I don't think so.

Will we see provincial elections or an Iraqi security force that is free from sectarian influence? I don't think so. As a matter of fact, the answer to all these questions is no. We haven't seen movement on the political front in the past 7 months, so why do we believe it will happen in the next 2 months? This is especially true, given that the Iraqi Parliament is taking a month off in August.

The surge was not supposed to be this silver bullet. It was supposed to give the Iraqi Government the space, the stability needed to come to a political solution. But as I say, this has not happened. As important, moving out of Iraq would open the door to a reevaluation of our national security interests in the region.

I happened to listen to Senator LUGAR on the floor in what I think was one of the most eloquent speeches I have heard. Let me quote from him.

> Our course in Iraq has lost contact with our vital national security interests in the Middle East and beyond. Our continuing absorption with military activities in Iraq is limiting our diplomatic assertiveness there and elsewhere in the world.

We know our Nation faces major challenges and the primary focus on Iraq has allowed these problems to fester. It has sapped our ability to act elsewhere, both by crippling our military's readiness and by draining our soft power around the world. Our challenges today, our real national interests, include: preventing terrorists from gaining safe haven in Pakistan and Afghanistan; preventing the violence in Iraq from spreading throughout the Middle East, Afghanistan, and the cities of Europe; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons technologies and strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. This is the national interest of this country.

Containing Iran and compelling it to abandon its uranium enrichment program and pursuing a sustained and robust diplomacy aimed at achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace—I am delighted the President has taken on this as a major initiative with priority and that the Secretary of State will be in charge of this effort.

Finally, improving the image of the United States and repairing the damage done to our credibility around the world.

Does anyone believe, truly, this war has gained us respect in the council of world nations? Does anyone believe that? Because if they do, they are smoking something. Because it has not. There has never been a time when America has less credibility abroad than today.

Does anybody believe this war is quelling a new generation of terrorists? It is doing exactly opposite.

Peter Bergen, whose books I have read, whose statements I follow, said the other day on CNN that he estimates terrorists have increased sevenfold, that is 700 percent, since the war in Iraq began. Is this our interest? Is our interest to encourage every madrasah all throughout the Arab and Islamic world to essentially preach to create a new generation of terrorists? That is what is happening right now and we are not addressing it. We are not spending the money, the $10 billion a month to see that there are normal schools in these countries that teach youngsters how to become educated, to accept a place of economic upward mobility in what is a modern world. No. Instead, the sores fester and the terrorists grow. That is the reason that, as far as air traffic is concerned, we are in orange alert today.

The simple truth is that none of these initiatives can be pursued adequately so long as we are bogged down in Iraq. Iraq dominates our Nation's psyche, it dominates our Nation's pocketbook, and it dominates in the loss of our men and women.

I think each deserves the continuous attention of this administration, and the longer we wait to begin a redeployment of our troops, the longer we delay the day of reckoning, the longer we refuse to take the diplomatic steps that are necessary to engage with Syria, to engage with Iran, the harder it is going to be to achieve a successful outcome. I believe this.

I believe the time has come to change course. Waiting is not going to change the facts on the ground. Oh, I wished I believed that. I wish I could say, in 2 months, we are not going to lose 200 men and women; in 2 months, 4,000 or 5,000 additional Iraqis will not be killed; 100,000 additional Iraqis are not going to be displaced, and we are not going to spend another $20 billion of our treasure. But I cannot.

In total, we have lost more than 3,600 of our brave men and women, almost 500 since this surge began 5 months ago. Nearly 27,000 have suffered injuries, and many of these injuries are more serious than anything we have ever seen in the history of veterans' care, people who will require care for the rest of their lives.

We lose 100 of our people every month. So why wait to act? The most recent Pentagon quarterly report on Iraq concluded that the ''aggregate level of violence'' in Iraq has remained ''unchanged''—unchanged. Five months into the surge, the level of violence in Iraq, according to the recent Pentagon report, is unchanged, and CIA analyst Tim Fingar testified to Congress last week the violence in Iraq has not yet been reduced significantly.

At the same time, even as we have appropriated $450 billion for this war, spending has increased to $10 billion a month; Armed Forces are stretched thin, equipment is worn, recruiting is down, and nobody knows what happens to the military come April when deployments cannot be met. So why wait to act?

We are going to be paying the costs of this war for decades. Yet this President has asked for more time. Waiting another 2 months will not change anything. It will be more of the same. As has been said on this floor tonight a myriad of times, but I must echo it: The President shows no inclination to listen to a majority of the Senate, to the American people or to the House of Representatives. He has provided no exit strategy, no plan to begin redeploying our troops. Come September, there is no reason to believe anything will have changed. Why wait to act?

I yield the floor.

(Disturbance in the visitors' galleries.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The gallery will refrain. It is not appropriate to express approval or disapproval in the galleries.

The senior Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, with this political stunt tonight, the Senate has reached the approximate level of the Iraqi Parliament in dealing with the war on Iraq. There will be no more votes for a fixed deadline for withdrawal from Iraq at 3 a.m. than there would be at 3 p.m. This demeans and trivializes the foremost issue facing our country. It does not show the proper respect for the men and women who have been fighting there and their families.

Here we are, issuing milestones, talking about benchmarks to an infant democracy on the other side of the world, issuing reports and report cards about how well they are doing on what we have told them to do, talking to them about why they haven't passed oil sharing and debaathification and why they have not had more elections, and we cannot come up, ourselves, with a consensus about what we are doing in Iraq.

Here we are, the oldest democracy in the world, alleging ourselves—the Senate—to be the greatest deliberative body in the world, and we are lecturing Iraq, a new democracy, an infant democracy. We are lecturing them for not coming up with a consensus when we can't come up with one ourselves.

I think it is important for the American people to know it is not necessarily that way in the Senate. I began this day at 8 a.m. at a breakfast, as I did last week, as I did the week before, which we call our bipartisan breakfast. This morning we had about a dozen Republicans and Democrats around the table—only Senators. Last week, we had two dozen around a table. Our subject was Iraq and the Defense authorization bill.

I will not say any more about what was discussed because one of the benefits of this breakfast is it is the only time during the week, except for our prayer breakfast on Wednesday, when we are not in team meetings, when there is not a group somewhere plotting what this side will do to that side or what that side will do to this side. It is amazing what sort of discussion we can have when we sit down around that sort of table. We have many of the same principles who have talked tonight on the Senate floor, people who have strongly held views and they are different views and they were stated clearly and explicitly and each of us respected those views. We heard them.

But at least as strong as the difference of opinion in that bipartisan breakfast—as it is each week when we talk—was the feeling that our main job was, as soon as we could, to come to some sort of consensus about where we go from here. Because the single most important thing we can do as a government, other than fund our troops, is to send them a clear signal that we agree on why we sent them there to fight and perhaps be wounded and perhaps to die and we failed in that responsibility. To compound it, we are in the midst of a political stunt which does not do anything to encourage us toward a consensus.

In my remarks tonight, rather than heap oil on the fire, what I would like to do is talk for a moment about how we could come to that consensus and about both Democrats and Republicans in this body who are working that way. Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the Senator from California, mentioned a number of Senators who do that. My experience with Members of this body began when I came to work here for the first time 40 years ago this year as a very junior aide. I have only been a Member of the body for 4 years. My experience is that most of us prefer to conduct ourselves like grownups, to not engage in petty kindergarten games, to not have partisan efforts where we taunt one another and try to put one another at a disadvantage but actually recognize we are here to look at big, difficult issues and to see if we can come up with a solution for one.

If there is such an issue that demands such a solution, it is America's role in Iraq. How would the Senate—if I am right that most of us would like

to have that kind of result—how would we go about working toward consensus, when we obviously have strongly held different views? For example, Senator LEVIN and Senator REED, two of the most senior Members of our body—one a distinguished graduate of West Point, one who has served as chairman or ranking member of the Armed Services Committee for a long time—they strongly believe, as the Senator from California believes, that unless the Congress imposes upon the President a fixed deadline for withdrawal, that we will not have any motion in that direction.

I respect that. I disagree with that. I believe that interferes with the constitutional prerogatives of the President. I do not believe it is practical in a time of war to say that a group of legislators, 100 generals here in this body, can guess a year out, even if that is the direction we want to go, exactly how to do it and exactly when to do that. That is why we have a Commander in Chief.

The Founders didn't pick this particular President, but they picked a President, a Chief Executive, with that responsibility. I respect that. That is of a difference of opinion. So we have profound and real and honest differences of opinion and they are reflected all the way across our country.

I hear them in Tennessee. The Presiding Officer hears them in his State. We hear them everywhere, and we feel them especially strongly because so many of our men and women have been there. In my State, 10,000 members of the National Guard and the Reserves have been to Iraq and Afghanistan; almost all of them more than once.

We think of General Petraeus as almost a hometown boy because he commanded the 101st Airborne Division. When he was there as its commander, he was accidentally shot through the heart in a training exercise. His life was saved, when he went to Vanderbilt Hospital, by none other than Bill Frist, our former majority leader, who was then a heart surgeon at Vanderbilt University. So we have unusual respect for General Petraeus.

We are the ''Volunteer State.'' We have sent more men and women to fight, we think, than almost any State, and we instinctively have great respect for the President of the United States.

That is where we start in our State. But, still, there are a great many Tennesseans who say to me it is time for a new strategy in Iraq. It is time for a change. We have helped depose Saddam Hussein. We have helped Iraq have an opportunity to have a democratic government. We have stayed a long time to help build their security. But now it is time for us to agree on a different strategy.

How would a country and how would a body such as the Senate go about that? One way to do it might be to pick 10 people from outside the Senate, 10 of the most distinguished Americans, and say to them: We are stuck here. We have a problem. The country has a problem. We need a shift of direction. We have a Senate that is divided, a President who is insisting on his constitutional prerogatives, and we have men and women fighting and dying in Iraq—what do we do? Ten Americans, let's pick five Democrats and five Republicans, to give it a little bit more prestige.

That happened last year. Frank Wolf, a Representative from Virginia; John Warner, Senator from this body, was a part of this as well—they created something called the Iraq Study Group. The Iraq Study Group was cochaired by Jim Baker, the former Secretary of State for President Bush, and by Lee Hamilton, the former Democratic chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. There were 10 prestigious Americans who served on the Iraq Study Group—if all of us were to put in a hat the names of Americans who might be good members of such a commission to help us unravel this problem, the 10 who were picked would come out of that hat pretty fast, in pretty good order, with a lot of Members on both sides of the aisle suggesting them.

For example, Larry Eagleburger, the former Secretary of State for the first President Bush; Vernon Jordan, the former president of the National Urban League and a very close associate of former President Clinton; Ed Meese, President Reagan's Attorney General; Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was the first woman to be appointed to the United States Supreme Court by President Reagan; Leon Panetta, who was President Clinton's Chief of Staff and who now in California has his own institute, the Leon & Sylvia Panetta Institute for Public Policy in Monterey, CA; Chuck Robb, our former colleague, married to Lynda Bird Johnson. We have been thinking about that family these past 2 weeks with Lady Bird's death; Chuck Robb, a former marine, former Senator, a member of that panel; Allen Simpson, who had the No. 2 position right over here, a whip in the Senate from Wyoming; and, at one point, Robert Gates, the current Secretary of Defense, was a member of this panel before he had to step aside when he went to the administration.

So those 10 people—five Democrats, five Republicans. It would be hard to improve on that.

Then, let's say you said to this group of 10: This is an especially difficult problem. The Senate is fractured, the President is insisting on his prerogative, and the country is divided and tired, and we need a solution. So what we need for you to do, commissioners, is not come back with a majority vote, not come back with a filibuster, not come back with an all-night political stunt, but come back with a unanimous set of recommendations of where we go from here in Iraq, you five Democrats, you five Republicans with years of experience.

That is precisely what they did in December of last year, after 9 or 10 meetings all over America, and meetings in Iraq, with a distinguished staff that consisted of an honor roll list of generals and experts. They visited with former President Clinton, former Vice President Mondale, former Secretary of State Albright, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Warren Christopher, they visited with Colin Powell and George Shultz, Tony Lake, General Scowcroft, to ask about everybody whose judgment one would hope they would ask, and they came up with 79 recommendations in December, and they released it to the public.

They unanimously agreed in 9 months about what to do in Iraq. They also did not pull any punches. They said in December, even though this was chaired by Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton, they said: The situation in Iraq is ''grave and deteriorating.'' They said there is no magic bullet. But they did unanimously agree, unlike the Levin-Reed amendment, that we did not need a fixed deadline. They unanimously agreed that troop deployments should be subject to conditions on the ground.

So what did they recommend? Well, in a few minutes I cannot summarize 79 recommendations, but I can boil it down to three points. First, we should move our troops from a combat mission to a support, equipping, and training mission as soon as we honorably can. They said, as a goal, that should happen in about a year, which then would have been the first quarter of 2008. Now, some time has gone past since then. But they said in about a year. The practical effect of that would have been to remove about half our combat forces—to reduce the number of American forces in Iraq by about half.

And, rather than subject that goal of reducing troops to a fixed deadline, as the Levin-Reed amendment says, they said it should be subject to developments on the ground, which is practical in a time of war, and respects the Commander in Chief's constitutional prerogative.

They said, No. 2: We should have a long-term interest in Iraq. It should be a limited interest, but there should be sufficient troops to help make certain that in that new mission we deal with that interest. They listed some of the things the troops would be expected to do who stayed: guard the Embassy, search and rescue, intelligence, special forces to go after al-Qaida—the point being, even though our troops have a different mission, out of a combat role into a support, equipping, and training mission, there would be enough of them there to send a message to the Middle East and the rest of the world: Stay out of Iraq. Give Iraq a chance to succeed, while also protecting U.S. forces that remained there. That was the second point.

The third point was step up. Step up the political and diplomatic efforts in the region by a significant amount, including talking with everybody in the region, to try to bring a result in Iraq.

So those are the three points. One, move out of the combat mission to the support, equipping, and training mission over about a year, without a deadline; two, a long-term but limited interest in Iraq, with some specifics; and, three, step up political and diplomatic efforts. Plus, the Iraq Study Group emphasized that we would still have a considerable presence in the region in Qatar and Kuwait and in Bahrain. So that is what the Iraq Study Group said.

What happened with the Iraq Study Group report? Well, I was very disappointed by the reaction to the report, especially when I saw that the recommendations were unanimous. When I first saw who were the distinguished members of that panel, I was convinced that at the State of the Union Address, President Bush would seat them in the gallery, and at the appropriate time, as Presidents often do, he would say: There they are, from the Reagan administration, from the Clinton administration, from my father's administration, and they have unanimously agreed on where we go from here in Iraq. And it is not exactly my proposal, it is their proposal, but because it is important to our troops and to our country and to the world that we move forward in a unified way, I accept their recommendations. I will develop a plan based upon their report. I ask you and the Congress to accept it.

I think there is a good chance that the Congress would accept such a plan, and an important part of that reason is because even the President needed someone else to help him develop support for whatever proposal he came up with. So that would be the first thing I think we would do if we were trying to solve this problem: go ask 10 of the most distinguished Americans of both parties to tell us what to do in specific recommendations, and do it unanimously.

Now, what is the second thing we would do? Well, I think we would come to this body and say: Every time we turn around there is a political stunt going on. Someone has had an early morning meeting and decided we are going to do this to the Republicans, and then some Republicans get excited, and they have an early morning meeting and say: We are going to do this to the Democrats. And you do not have the kind of discussion that these 10 Americans had or the kind we have in our bipartisan breakfasts.

But the second thing that needs to be done to move us in a consensus on where we go from here in Iraq would be to find some Senator in this body who would say: We are going to accept this Iraq Study Group report, and we are going to ask that the President agree to it and develop a plan based upon it and report to us on it in 90 days.

That is precisely what Senator SALAZAR did with his legislation. After saying in January that I was disappointed the President did not adopt the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, I made a speech on the floor in March. I find that sometimes you have to say things more than once in order to have anybody pay attention.

I said: Why didn't the President, in March, take the Iraq Study Group down off the shelf and use it for something other than a book end? And then I made another speech to that effect, and Senator PRYOR of Arkansas came by to see me and said: We need to do something about this. We need to find a way to work together rather than to continue to have Democratic and Republican votes on Iraq.

Then Senator SALAZAR called me and said: I have been working with Secretary Baker, and with Lee Hamilton and their staffs. I put together legislation that accurately reflects the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. And it simply adopts those recommendations as our law. If the President agrees to it, he is asked to develop a comprehensive plan based on those recommendations.

Since that time, there are now 14 of us in the Senate on both sides of the aisle who are cosponsors of that idea. Senator SALAZAR is the leader. He has done a terrific job on that. He is a Democrat from Colorado. In addition to my cosponsorship, we have been joined by MARK PRYOR, a Democrat from Arkansas; BOB BENNETT, a Republican from Utah; ROBERT CASEY, a Democrat from Pennsylvania; JUDD GREGG, a Republican from New Hampshire; BLANCHE LINCOLN, a Democrat from Arkansas; JOHN SUNUNU, a Republican from New Hampshire; SUSAN COLLINS, a Republican from Maine; PETE DOMENICI, a Republican from New Mexico; BILL NELSON, a Democrat from Florida; MARY LANDRIEU, a Democrat from Louisiana; CLAIRE MCCASKILL, a Democrat from Missouri; and KENT CONRAD, a Democrat from North Dakota.

My guess is that if the Democratic Senate leadership would back off a little bit, if the President would be more flexible, there are probably 60 votes coming from both sides of the aisle for the Baker-Hamilton report, and if that should be adopted by the Congress, we can move forward, which brings me to my final point.

What would be the third step in having a bipartisan consensus for our country that would say to our troops and the world: We agree on why you are there, and we support that mission? It would be for the President to embrace the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. The President of the United States does not want to do that. I respect that. He has an absolute constitutional right to say: Our Framers created the Executive, I am the Commander in Chief, we cannot have 100 generals, I will develop the plan, and I will command the troops. That is my job.

He is right about that, except he has another part to his job. George Reedy, who was the Press Secretary to former President Lyndon Johnson, wrote a book called, ''Twilight of the Presidency.'' In it he defined the President of the United States. He said, No. 1, his job is to see an urgent need; No. 2, to develop a strategy to meet the need; and No. 3 is to persuade at least half of the people that he is right.

I do not believe that President Bush, even if he is right in September, is likely to be able to persuade enough people to support his strategy to be able to sustain the strategy. Let me say that again. Even if he is right in September, even if he takes many parts of the Baker-Hamilton group and announces it as his strategy, at this stage in our history, I do not believe he can persuade enough Americans to support his strategy to sustain the strategy.

I believe this strategy should be sustained. So how does he do that? The way he does that is to embrace those who wrote this and those who support this so that it is not just his strategy, so that it is our strategy, so that he can say to the troops in the Middle East, and to the rest of the Middle East, and to the world: The Congress and I have come together around a set of principles. I am developing a plan on those principles. And not everyone agrees, but a consensus of us agree, which is why I would say to the Democratic leader, with respect, I do not mind requiring 60 votes on the Iraq issues. We need a consensus. We do not want to have an Iraq policy that passes by 51 to 49. We need a consensus. I believe we can have it.

There are some who say adopting the Iraq Study Group principles, the Salazar-Alexander legislation, is toothless. I respectfully disagree. My grandfather was a railroad engineer, a Santa Fe railroad engineer. He lived in Newton, KS, and his job was to drive the big locomotives onto the roundtable it was called. And that was how you turned a locomotive around. A locomotive might be about as hard to turn around as a country in the middle of a war. But that is what my grandfather did. He turned that locomotive around. And it was turned around. They put it on a different track and off it went in a different direction.

If we and the President were to agree on the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, it would be just like my grandfather putting that big locomotive on the roundtable in Newton, KS. It would be turned around and sent down a different track. And, for now, at least, those on the other side would pick another engineer. But the engineer cannot do much about that track once he is on it. It would be headed down the track, the world would know it, and in good faith we could work together.

When I was an impatient young man working in the White House 40 years ago, a wise man named Bruce Harlow said to me: Lamar, just remember that here—he meant the White House—just a little tilt makes big waves out there.

If this Congress and this President adopted together the Iraq Study Group recommendations this week, that

would make big waves out there, and that would be a new consensus for our country.

Some said: Well, the Iraq Study Group is a little stale. It is out of date. It was done in December.

Lee Hamilton, the Democratic co-chairman said: No. He said: We said in December the situation was grave and deteriorating. It still is. We said in December we need to move from a combat mission to support, equipping, and training. We still do. This week he said: In addition, we need to have a long-term limited role in Iraq. And we still do. And finally he said: We need to step up our diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq, and we still do.

To the President, I would say with the greatest respect, because he is a member of my own party, and I have talked with him about this before, I would say: Mr. President, I do respect your prerogative. I know you can draw the plan up. I know you want to sit down first with General Petraeus, whom we all respect and whom I especially do, as a friend, because he spent so much time in Tennessee. But the Salazar-Alexander legislation has no chance of taking effect until September. And all it asks you to do is to draw up a comprehensive plan based upon the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. The first person you sit down with can be General Petraeus.

And I would ask the President whether it be better for him to ignore the Iraq Study Group and come up with his own plan, or would it be better for him to come to the Congress and say: Congress, I will adopt these. Why don't you adopt these and let's send our troops a message that we are united in what they are fighting for?

So there are 14 of us, 8 Democrats, 6 Republicans at this point, who support and cosponsor the Iraq Study Group. But I believe there are many more of us who could be comfortable with it, who could vote for it, even if it is not our first choice.

So I regret this all-night political stunt, but I respect this body. I see it every week in those bipartisan breakfasts, talking like the people of this country wish we always would when confronted by a major issue. I salute Senators SALAZAR and PRYOR and those on that side, and Senator GREGG, Senator BENNETT, Senator COLLINS, and those on this side who are working together to fix that. I hope more of our colleagues will join us soon.

The President and the Congress could agree on the Baker-Hamilton recommendations, and we would say to our troops: We not only will fund you, but we can now also say to you and to the Middle East that we agree on your mission, on why you are fighting, and why you are being wounded, and why you are dying.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I see that many of my colleagues have come to the floor, so I will try to be brief in my remarks. But I would like to assure my good friend from Tennessee that this is not a stunt. This is a very strong and clear and unwavering statement tonight that the President and the Republican leadership are leading this country in the wrong direction, and now is the time to change it.

I have not been to Hollywood too many times, but I have been there enough to know that there is a lot of glitter, fountains, big lights. I do not see any fountains or glitter on the floor of the Senate. I see hard-working Senators who are here to debate the most important issue.

And for our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to question our intentions is beneath the dignity of this body. Let me repeat again for the Senator from Tennessee, to the Senator from Kentucky, and all of my friends: This is not a stunt. This is an exercise in reality. And this is not Hollywood, this is the Senate, and this is exactly what people in the Senate do, debate.

And what we also like to do is vote. But we are not allowed to vote because the minority leader has decided that we are not going to have a vote. We have a majority of votes to change direction. I would argue with the other side that we are never going to get 80 percent or 90 percent of the Senate to move in one direction or another in a situation such as this. It is an impossible barrier to achieve.

But we may get a growing number, a majority of Senators who represent the majority of the population in America to say to the President that we want to go in another direction. So tonight is not a stunt. It is a statement saying it is time to allow us to vote.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, will the President yield for a question?

Ms. LANDRIEU. No, I will not.

I also say to the Senator, I am a cosponsor of the Iraq Study Group legislation by Senator SALAZAR, on which he worked so hard and so honestly to build bipartisan support. But what happened when the President gave his State of the Union Address 2 years ago when things looked as though they were not going very well in Iraq? We had more deaths, more violence, and a bipartisan group did come together, some of the great minds on this issue. What did the President do? He dismissed the document.

I am not sure what the Senator from Tennessee thinks, maybe the President will wake up tomorrow morning and decide to read the report. But he hasn't read it for 2 years. It is not being implemented. That is what this debate is about.

I don't know how many more commissions we could commission. I don't know how many more experts we could gather. I don't know how many more Republicans and Democrats could come together to explain to this President it is not working. So I am not sure about creating another commission. We have already had many. He doesn't even read the recommendations. They are right here. Here they are, not implemented into law. But can we vote on this? No, because the minority leader says they don't want to have a vote on these recommendations.

I wish to say another thing about the role of the Congress and the President. I am so tired of hearing the other side say: Why does Congress have anything to say about this matter? Maybe because our Constitution says we should, maybe because the intelligence reports that are done are not just presented to the President and his military generals and leaders and war fighters. The intelligence reports are given to us. There was one delivered this morning I would like to read.

Before I read what it says, I wish to read the way it says it.

> Since its formation in 1973, the National Intelligence Council has served as a bridge between the intelligence and policy communities, a source of deep, substantive expertise on critical national security issues, and as a focal point for Intelligence Community collaboration. . . . [It] provides a focal point for policymakers . . .

That would be me, I am a policymaker. I ran for the job. I am elected. I am here to make policy, and I intend to make it.

> . . . Warfighters, and Congressional leaders to task the Intelligence Community for answers—

We sure need some important questions, such as how to win the war against terrorism.

They don't send this to the President and say: After you finish reading it, let us know what you want us to do. They send it to us, and today they sent us another one.

What it said in this report is:

> Al-qa'ida is and will remain the most serious terrorist threat to the Homeland, as its central leadership continues to plan high-impact plots, while pushing others in extremist Sunni communities to mimic its efforts and to supplement its capabilities.

It is clearly saying, yes, there are some threats and activities in Sunni areas in Iraq, but there are also Sunni areas around the world. And so Osama bin Laden is still loose.

I brought his picture tonight so I could remind the President what he looks like. He is still on the loose, the leader of al-Qaida. This is his description. He is 6 foot 4 inches to 6 foot 6 inches, approximately 160 pounds. He is thin. Occupation unknown. We know now what he does. His hair is brown. His eyes are brown. His complexion is olive. And there is a reward—and thank goodness they let us have a vote on Byron Dorgan's amendment because now the reward is $50 million instead of $25 million. Maybe the President will veto that provision. I don't know. But I, frankly, think that was a good idea. Maybe we should raise it a little higher. I don't know what Congress is doing discussing what the reward should be for Osama bin Laden. Clearly, we have nothing to say about this issue. I am glad we voted to increase the reward. I would like to see if we can find him and

kill him. If we would stop spending $500 million a day, $35 million before breakfast every day in Iraq, maybe we could find him because he is not in Baghdad.

We, obviously, have disagreements about the way to proceed, but I can assure my colleagues this is not a stunt. This is a real debate that is taking place in a real place that is the real Senate of the United States. It is not Hollywood.

The President and the Republican leadership have made many mistakes. Nobody is perfect, and we all make them. But we have to change course. What we are doing is not working. He is still loose. The estimate today says that al-Qaida is as strong as it was on 9/11. If we are winning the war, I am not sure that 4 years after you engage, if your enemy is stronger than it was when you started, that is winning under any definition. But that is what the Republican leadership continues to tell people: despite the mounting casualties, the increased funerals, and the tremendous strains on our soldiers and their families coming home, that we are most certainly winning. The American people don't believe it.

Some people are asking to pull out. I am not asking that, but I am asking for a change of direction. I brought this picture to the floor today to remind everybody how we got here in the first place. Saddam Hussein did not attack the United States, Osama bin Laden did, and he is still alive, and now terrorism is around the world in places it was not before we started down this road. If we are not careful, we are going to spend all our money there, all the American people's patience there, and all their will there and still not find the guy we are looking for and the central intelligence of al-Qaida. I know he is not the only part of al-Qaida, but he is the leader, and we need to find him.

So however one feels about the issue, I don't think spending one night on the floor of the Senate, which is not a Hollywood set but the real deal, is too much to ask, since our soldiers have spent every night for 5 years on the battlefield around the world.

I will make one more point. I hope that nobody comes to my State or on the floor and accuses me of not supporting our troops in uniform because I will have several words for them. Every time we disagree about procedures, the ones who don't agree with the President are accused of not supporting our troops. We couldn't support them more.

So I hope we can get past that reasoning and perhaps we can find a better consensus. But the place we are going, the direction we are going is not right. We need to change course, and we need to fight smart, we need to fight tough, we need to go where the enemy is, and we need to protect America.

According to this intelligence report that was issued this morning, it doesn't look like we are doing that. That is what this debate is about. I look forward to continuing many nights into the future and days ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, before the distinguished Senator from Connecticut begins, can we see about getting a unanimous consent agreement relative to some order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut has the floor.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I will yield to the Senator for the purpose of propounding a unanimous consent request but without yielding the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I propose that the Senator from Connecticut go for as long as he might take; that the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS, follow him. Does the Senator know who wants to go next on his side? The Senator from New Jersey?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut has the floor.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, responding to the Senator from Georgia, I understand the Senator from Ohio, Mr. BROWN, wishes to speak next in order.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Senator BROWN would follow Senator COLLINS and Senator ISAKSON would follow Senator BROWN.

Mr. BROWN. I object. The informal order established was Senator ALEXANDER, Senator LANDRIEU, Senator LIEBERMAN, myself, then a Republican, and then Senator MENENDEZ. I ask unanimous consent that be the order.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I think that is what I said.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut still has the floor.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I am sorry, I put Senator COLLINS ahead of Senator BROWN and I was wrong. Senator BROWN would follow Senator LIEBERMAN, Senator COLLINS follows Senator BROWN.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Then if my friend from Georgia will allow, I gather the Senator from New Jersey, Mr. MENENDEZ, will be next.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Following Senator COLLINS, that is correct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. We will figure out where we are at the end of that time.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to address the amendment offered by Senator LEVIN and Senator REED and to explain why I will vote against cloture on the amendment tomorrow morning.

I think it is important to explain that because my friend from Louisiana who spoke before me had behind her a sign that said: Let us vote. We may see that sign again. I wish to indicate that we are going to have a vote. We are going to have a vote tomorrow morning. And the question is: Will we sustain what has been a bedrock policy of the Senate to require 60 votes for a matter of great importance that comes before this body, particularly a matter where there is a lot at stake?

This amendment offered by my colleagues from Michigan and Rhode Island is a very serious amendment. Some of us believe it would have disastrous consequences for the security of the United States of America, for the safety of our troops in Iraq, for the stability of the region, for any hope for democracy in the Middle East, and a better future for the people of that part of the world than the suicidal death and hatred al-Qaida offers them.

But you know, I have recollection of times in the Senate hearing the distinguished Senator from West Virginia, Mr. BYRD. He has made, over the years, some compelling arguments for why the Senate has this unusual procedure of requiring 60 votes on matters of great importance. I am not quoting him directly, but this is consistent with the vision of one of the Framers—I believe it was Madison, I am not sure—who said, if you will, that the Senate is the saucer in which the Congress will cool the coffee. As Senator BYRD said much more to the point, we in this Chamber have had for a long time this ability to request 60 votes to pass a matter when there are Members of the Senate—and I am one in this case—who believe the passage of this matter would have a profoundly negative effect on our country and its security.

I know some of my colleagues disagree with me, of course. But I am exercising my right within the tradition of the Senate to do what senior colleagues have advised over the years: to stop the passions, the political passions of a moment from sweeping across Congress into law and altering our future permanently. I have done it on other matters. I have done it on environmental matters, where I think something proposed will have so adverse an effect on some of the natural wonders that God has given the United States of America that I have said: No, I am going to be part of a group to demand 60 votes because if I allow this to pass by less, there will be an irreversible change that will occur.

With respect to my colleagues who are saying let us vote, we will vote. But the question on that vote is will we ask for 60 votes to adopt this very significant amendment? I say it is in the best traditions of the Senate to require 60 votes before this amendment is adopted.

Second, before I get to the merits of the amendment or my opinion about it, I wish to respond to something my friend from Tennessee, Senator ALEXANDER, said about the bipartisan meeting we had this morning, people of different opinions on this issue discussing in a closed room across a table looking for common ground. I wish to express my own sense of disappointment, sadness, though unfortunately in these

very partisan times not surprise, that this debate we are having which reaches a kind of pitch, a moment of confrontation on the Levin-Reed amendment which would mandate a withdrawal from Iraq, that this debate is so partisan. I have a point of view about the war in Iraq and what I think is best for our security and future policy in Iraq.

I know people have different points of view. I respect that. This is a difficult, a very difficult matter on which to reach judgment. So people, of course, can have different points of view, but why do we divide in those different points of view on party lines? There is no inherent reason why that should happen. It is a sign of what ails our political system, what afflicts our Federal Government and hamstrings it, what frustrates and ultimately angers the American people about what they see here because what they see is that too often we seem to be playing partisan politics, we seem to be in a kind of partisan tug of war. The net result of that is that nothing gets done.

Wars are always controversial. Wars have been controversial throughout our history. But rarely have the divisions between those who support a war and oppose it or support particular policies associated with it and oppose it been as partisan as they are at this moment. It has to stop. If it doesn't stop on Iraq, I believe our Nation will be weakened seriously.

We have to find ways, no matter what the partisan pressures are, to come together as Americans to defend our Nation against those who hate us all—al-Qaida, Iran, the fanatics running around who exhort the tens of thousands to shout ''Death to America.'' They have been doing it since the revolution of 1979. They do it weekly throughout Iran: ''Death to America.'' Surely we understand they don't distinguish between Republicans and Democrats when they shout ''Death to America. We should have the common sense, let alone a sense of responsibility to our country, to come together and defend our Nation against those who want to destroy us, as al-Qaida began to do on 9/11.

I regret the partisanship that characterizes this debate.

I wish to talk very briefly about how we got here, not going over it in any detail. This Congress authorized the President to take action to overthrow Saddam Hussein after the administration had attempted, through the United Nations Security Council, to get Saddam to take certain steps, including proving to us he had destroyed the weapons of mass destruction, he had filed an inventory with the United Nations Security Council as a condition of the truce and end to the gulf war of 1991.

I don't wish to revisit that. I know people look back at him and think they were deceived in why we went to war. I think the world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. But this takes me to this point. For 3 years afterward, this country followed a strategy in Iraq that didn't work. We followed a strategy in Iraq for too long that didn't work. I strongly supported the war to overthrow Saddam Hussein and deeply desired that we do everything we could not just to overthrow him but to try to create within Iraq a new Iraq, a free Iraq, a self-governing Iraq that would give hope to people throughout the Arab world, the Muslim world, of a better future than the one that al-Qaida offers them, which is a return to a millennium ago, away from the modern world, but we erred for 3 years. Many of us cried out that we did not have enough troops there, we were following a strategy that did not work, too few troops and not focusing on al-Qaida training, an insufficient ability to do that, and letting the terrorists essentially take hold of the country.

Finally, last year, the President of the United States, as Commander in Chief, changed the course in Iraq. He changed the leadership of the Pentagon, which was critically necessary. He brought in a new Secretary of Defense, consulted with experts on all sides about what to do, how to improve what was happening in Iraq, and adopted a totally new strategy. That is why when I hear people in this debate saying we need a change of course in Iraq, well, we got a change of course, finally. It was later than I hoped for, but, finally, at the end of last year, beginning in February, the counteroffensive, called a surge, and a new general, a great general—a general in the tradition of Maxwell Taylor, General Abrams, a general who was called on in a very difficult situation, probably the single most informed leader on counterinsurgency in our military, GEN David Petraeus, to take charge of these troops—and he gave him 30,000 additional troops.

The evidence thus far is incomplete, because as has been said, and will be said again, the surge was just fully staffed about a month ago. But you have to look at the statistics. I know the benchmark that came in, the interim one last week, was mixed. But on the security side, which is what the surge was first aimed at, deaths from sectarian violence are way down in Baghdad, more than half the city is now under the control of American and Iraqi forces, and normalcy is returning to many parts of the capital city, and Anbar Province, the story is well known now. Basically, the additional troops and the new strategy enabled us to convince the Sunni tribal leaders in Anbar, which al-Qaida was going to make the capital of its Islamist extremist caliphate, We convinced the tribal leaders we were there to stay, so they came to our side, and al-Qaida is on the run—and for the first time. Always before we had the strategy where we would chase the terrorists out of a community, a city, in Baghdad, and we would leave and then they would come back. This time, in Anbar Province, we left some of our marines and some of the Iraqi security forces, working with the Sunni indigenous tribal leaders, and what did we do? We followed al-Qaida on the run to Diyala Province, to Baquba city, the major city there, and we have them on the run there as well. As a result, the tribal leaders there are beginning to come over to our side. So this surge, interim as the reports are, is, on the ground, working.

Now comes the Levin-Reed amendment. I wish to say to my colleagues this is not the Levin-Reed amendment we voted on earlier this year. That amendment did require the beginning of a withdrawal of troops within 120 days of passage, as this amendment does. But that amendment set a goal—G-O-A-L—a goal for our troops to be substantially withdrawn from Iraq by the end of March of next year. It is no longer a goal in this Levin-Reed amendment. It is a mandate, a rigid deadline that by the end of April of next year most of our troops are out of Iraq. A core group is left, presumably with the stated purpose to train the Iraqis and to fight al-Qaida, which is exactly what the previous policy that failed was aimed at doing.

Some have said this is the only amendment with teeth. It does have teeth. But I think we have to ask: Who does it bite? I think it bites our hope for success in Iraq. It bites our troops, as they proceed day in and day out, courageously, compassionately, effectively. It bites our hope for keeping al-Qaida and Iran out of controlling Iraq. This amendment mandates a retreat to begin in 4 months, 120 days, regardless of what is happening on the ground.

This is not a debate about whether to change course in Iraq, it is a debate about whether to accept and embrace defeat in Iraq. We have changed course, as I said before. This is a debate about whether we are going to give our generals and our troops the chance that they say they need to succeed, and succeed they know they can, or if we are going to order them to retreat—we order them to retreat—as they on the ground are risking their lives every day and succeeding.

We are going to, if this amendment passes, impose a deadline that is as inflexible as it is arbitrary. I say this with respect, but I say it from the bottom of my heart. This is a deadline for an American defeat, one that we will pay for, I fear, for a generation to come.

Let us be absolutely clear again about what the amendment we are debating now would do. If adopted, this amendment would literally put this Congress between the Commander in Chief, our generals, and our soldiers in the field. So just as our troops are on the offensive against al-Qaida in Iraq, just as our troops have the enemy on the run, this amendment would reach 5,000 miles across the ocean and put our troops on the run in retreat and defeat.

I will tell you this, the American military, the best in the world—courageous, resourceful, fighting a tough fight but adjusting to it, resilient, finding ways to succeed—the American military will never lose the war in Iraq. The war in Iraq, if it is to be lost, will be lost as a result of a loss of political will here at home, and you have to judge the consequences of that. Each one of us has to.

In the midst of an unpredictable war, this amendment would strip our military commanders not only of the troops they say they need to succeed—this amendment would remove the troops from our commanding generals—it would strip them of the authority and the ability to adapt to changing conditions, which, after all, is what success in war is all about, putting America's military in a legislative straitjacket.

I am going to do everything I can to stop that from happening, and that is why I am going to vote against cloture. This amendment is wrong. I truly believe it is dangerous. In fact, this amendment should not even be considered now. I welcome the debate, but I believe, when we passed the supplemental appropriations bill in which we authorized the surge to go forward, in which we appropriated funds for the surge, in which we established the requirement for the benchmark, for which we got the study last week and then the next one coming in September, to me we made an institutional pledge in that to General Petraeus and the troops. Because in that bill we required General Petraeus, along with our Ambassador to Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, to come back in September and report to us. We wanted to give them, at the request of General Petraeus, time from the middle of June, when the surge troops would have arrived, to September to see whether he could make it work and report back to us.

I don't think there is a person in this Chamber, no matter what our position on Iraq, that doesn't trust General Petraeus to tell us the truth, what he believes, when he comes back in September. I think we made an institutional pledge to him. But I know this: I made a personal pledge to him. I am going to give him and the troops a fair chance, which this amendment would deprive him of, and I am going to give him until September to come back and tell me how it is going.

All of us would like to believe, I certainly would, that there is a quick and easy solution to the challenges we face in Iraq. All of us, I certainly would, would like to go back and do over a lot of what happened after Saddam Hussein was overthrown. All of us want our brave men and women in uniform to come home safely and as soon as possible. All of us are keenly aware of the frustration and fatigue the American people are feeling about this war. But we, who have been honored by our constituents to be elected to serve in the Senate, have a responsibility to lead, not to follow. We have a responsibility—it is the oath we took when we were sworn in—to do what we believe is right for our country, even if it is unpopular.

I speak for myself, but I firmly believe what is right is that we cannot allow our Nation to be defeated in Iraq by the same Islamist extremists who attacked us on 9/11, with whom we are engaged now in a worldwide war that stretches from Baghdad to London, from Madrid to Riyadh, from Bali to Jerusalem, and from Fort Dix to JFK Airport.

The sponsors of this resolution insist what is happening in Iraq is a civil war, and they want us to not be part of it. But this argument flies in the face of the statements of al-Qaida's own top leaders who have repeatedly told us they consider Iraq to be, today, the central battlefield of their world war against us. We didn't start this world war, they did, by attacking us.

I wish to take a moment to read some comments, direct quotes, from leaders of al-Qaida that make this clear. I am not making it up. I am not quoting somebody in the administration.

December 2004. Osama bin Laden.

> I now address my speech to the whole of the Islamic nation. Listen and understand. The most important and serious issue today for the whole world is this Third World war. It is raging in the lands of the two rivers—Iraq. The world's millstone and pillar is Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate.

July 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri, second to bin Laden, as we know, in al-Qaida. A letter to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the head of Iraq, subsequently killed by coalition forces. Quote from Zawahiri to Zarqawi:

> I want to be the first to congratulate you for what God has blessed you with in terms of fighting a battle in the heart of the Islamic world, what is now the place for the greatest battle of Islam in this era.

Zawahiri, in that same letter:

> The Mujahadeen must not have their mission end with the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq. No, the first stage is to expel the Americans from Iraq; the second stage is to establish an Islamic authority, or emirate, over as much of the territory as you can, to spread its power in Iraq.

And then there is a third stage Zawahiri says.

> The third stage is to extend the jihad to the secular countries neighboring Iraq.

This is not me. This is not some administration spokesperson, this is Zawahiri, No. 2 in al-Qaida.

December of 2006, Zawahiri says:

> The backing of the jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq today is to back the most important battlefields in which the crusade against Islam is in progress, and the defeat of the crusaders will have a far-reaching effect on the future of the Muslim Umah.

I could go on. I will read one final one. May 2007, 2 months ago, and this is Zawahiri again in a tape.

> The critical importance of the jihad in Iraq and Afghanistan becomes clear, because the defeat of the crusaders there soon, Allah permitted, lead to the setting up of two mujahedin emirates, which will be launch pads for the liberation of the Islamic lands and the establishment of the caliphate. That is why I call on the Muslim Umah not to lag behind or tarry in supporting jihad in general and jihad in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, in view of the pivotal importance of these two arenas.

I started this because I said that some of my colleagues offering this amendment say we are in a civil war in Iraq and we ought not to be there. There is sectarian violence. That is why we have the counterinsurgency plan, which is to try to stop the sectarian violence, and it is working so far. Surely we don't know whether it will work finally, but sectarian violence has been significantly reduced in Baghdad and now Anbar and Diyala Provinces. But the argument that this is simply a civil war is totally rejected, denied by these statements of al-Qaida's own leaders.

We are fighting al-Qaida in Iraq. You can't withdraw from Iraq and fight al-Qaida. That is whom we are fighting. Who is going to win if we pull out? Al-Qaida will and Iran will. Listen to what Zawahiri and bin Laden said they are going to do: They are going to establish the capital of the caliphate, the empire, and they are going to go out into the neighboring countries.

Incidentally, the notion that somehow we are not fighting al-Qaida in Iraq and that this is just a civil war also flies in the face of the National Intelligence Estimate on al-Qaida that was released today, which describes al-Qaida in Iraq as the most visible and capable affiliate of al-Qaida worldwide. Of note, and I quote in full:

> We assess that al-Qaeda will probably seek to leverage the context and capabilities of al-Qaeda in Iraq, its most visible and capable affiliate, and the only one that is beyond bin Laden and Zawahiri, the only local affiliate known to have expressed a desire to attack the American homeland.

So I know people laugh or jest when people say if we don't defeat them there we will be fighting them here, but this is what the National Intelligence Estimate says. We are fighting al-Qaida in Iraq, the only local affiliate of al-Qaida that has also talked about, and some have reason to believe may be acting upon, their desire to attack America here in our homeland. That is the National Intelligence Estimate.

It seems to me that it is perverse that on the same day we receive this National Intelligence Estimate about the threat posed by al-Qaida and about its direct linkage to Iraq, Zawahiri to Zarqawi, bin Laden talking about the centrality of what is happening in Iraq, that the Senate would consider voting for an amendment mandating our retreat in the face of al-Qaida from Iraq.

I ask, why is this amendment before us? One of the most commonly heard explanations for the amendment mandating the beginning of a withdrawal of American troops in 120 days, and most of them out by next April, is that an American military retreat is necessary—and I quote here one of the

sponsors of the amendment—''to prod the Iraqi Government to reach a political settlement.''

So we are going to force a retreat, probably threaten the viability of the Iraqi Government, yield the country to al-Qaida and Iranian-backed terrorists, and we are doing it to send a message to the Iraqi political leadership that they better get their act together. But the argument that our forcing a retreat of our military, our troops, will prod the Iraqi Government to reach a political settlement is pure speculation. It is amateur psychology without any evidence that I can see to support it. In fact, the expert evidence goes in the other direction. From people who follow what is happening in Iraq closely, who say that as soon—and maybe some of this is psychology, too, but to me it seems more sensible than the other argument—as soon as we begin to set a deadline date, the Iraqi political leadership is not going to suddenly come together and settle their differences, they are going to hunker down in camps and get ready for the battle of all battles, which will be a total civil war, huge ethnic slaughter I fear, probably a kind of genocide.

One of our military leaders in Iraq when I was there 5 weeks ago said to me: Senator, if your colleagues don't like what they see in Darfur today, and they should not like it, they are going to hate what they see in Iraq if the American military pulls out before the Iraqis can maintain security.

Here, too, we have a National Intelligence Estimate that directly rejects the contention that we need to force a retreat of our troops, open the country to a takeover by al-Qaida in Iraq, to convince the Iraqi Government to reach a political settlement.

There was a recent National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq. In it, the conclusion was presented that the rapid withdrawal of U.S. troops required by this amendment would, ''almost certainly have adverse effects on national reconciliation'' in Iraq.

So rather than promoting political progress, this amendment would have the exact opposite effect than its sponsors intend, and actually undermine it.

I know that cots have been brought in tonight to allow Senators to sleep during parts of the night when they are not required on the floor. I think, really, what I hope this does is wake up the Senators and wake up the American people to the threat we face; to wake them up to what our intelligence agencies are saying about Iraq, to what the stakes for us are in Iraq, for what the consequences are for us of a defeat in Iraq, for the strength of the Petraeus counteroffensive surge and how much it is achieving.

It is time for all of us to wake up to what is actually happening in Iraq before it is too late. It is time to stop dreaming that a mandated withdrawal, or whatever you call it—a redeployment is really nothing other than a mandated defeat. I suppose if you don't think that defeat in Iraq will have consequences for our future security, then I can understand that. But I, of course, profoundly disagree.

We face vicious enemies in Iraq today. We know who they are. They are al-Qaida and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Al-Qaida is fighting in Iraq because they want to bring down the Iraqi Government and they want to stop any progress toward self-government until a modern Iraq. They want the state to fail so they can establish what bin Laden, Zawahiri, and Zarqawi said clearly, a caliphate, an empire with the capital of the empire there.

What about Iran? Iran is training, funding, and arming terrorists to kill Americans in Iraq. This Senate spoke unanimously against that, presenting evidence of it last week, 97 to 0. Why does Iran do that? It wants America out of Iraq so it can dominate that country and the region.

These are enemies that cannot be negotiated with or reasoned out of existence. I am all for diplomacy with Iran. I am glad our ambassador met with their ambassador in Baghdad in May, but ultimately negotiations that have gone on with Iran, conducted by the European Governments for more than 2 years to try to convince them to stop the development of nuclear weapons, produced nothing but giving them 2 more years to go ahead with that development. These are not enemies who are interested in the political reconciliation of which the sponsors of this amendment speak.

In other words, al-Qaida and Iran are not fighting in Iraq to encourage or bring about a political reconciliation. These enemies must be confronted and defeated through force of arms. That is precisely what our brave men and women in uniform are doing today under this new counterinsurgency strategy, and they are succeeding. I ask my colleagues in this Chamber finally to listen carefully to the words of a great American soldier, Rick Lynch, commander of the Third Infantry Division now serving in Iraq. His soldiers are, today, leading the fight south of Baghdad. General Lynch reported just this past weekend that his forces were making significant gains in reclaiming areas that just a few weeks ago in Baghdad were terrorist safe havens. These are towns on the outskirts of Baghdad where al-Qaida in Iraq had terrorized the local population into submission and then set up shop, assembling the car bombs that then were used to kill hundreds of innocent people earlier this year. That is the way to try to stop these suicidal maniacs from blowing themselves up and killing a lot of Iraqis and Americans with them—which is their attempt to respond to our counteroffensive surge policy and their attempt to do something else: to influence the American public opinion to get out of Iraq.

General Lynch also stated that in his professional military judgment—this is a soldier, not a politician—the current troop surge must be maintained through early next year in order to achieve success. In his words:

> It's going to take us through the summer and fall to deny the enemy his sanctuaries and then it's going to take us through the first of the year into the spring to consolidate these gains.

Incidentally, it may be that those gains will be consolidated by next spring, and we will be able to begin to draw down some of the American forces there. But do we have the confidence to know that today, to mandate that to happen? I hope we are in a position—and I am sure General Petraeus does, and I am sure the President does—to begin to order that kind of beginning of withdrawal because the surge has succeeded, not order a withdrawal as an alternative policy to the surge.

I return to General Lynch. He warned that pulling back before the job was completed would ''create an environment where the enemy would come back in and fill the void.'' General Lynch also reported that he was ''amazed at the cooperation his troops were encountering in previously hostile areas.'' In his words:

> When we go out there the first question the Iraqis ask us is, are you staying? And the second question is, how can we help?

In other words, what General Lynch said is what they are worried about is our leaving. And our answer is: We are staying. And when we give that answer they say: How can we help?

They want a better future than al-Qaida and Iran controlling their country. General Lynch has given us a clear and compelling explanation in the direct words of a soldier about the nature of this war. In his view, the U.S. military needs the additional troops that are now in theater to prevail, and they are, as we speak, prevailing. In this regard, the choice before this Senate is a direct one. Either General Lynch is badly mistaken about the reality of this war or this amendment is badly mistaken about the reality of this war. They cannot both be right.

I go with General Lynch. He is on the ground. He has no motives other than to do what is right for his country. He has every motive to want to protect his troops. But he believes in our cause.

We have a choice to make. We can ignore the recommendations of our general in the field and withdraw in defeat. We can rationalize our action with reassuring but falsely hopeful words such as ''redeployment,'' but no matter what we say our enemy will know that America's will has been broken by the barbarity of their blood lust, the very barbarity we declare we are fighting, but from which, if this amendment ever passed, we would actually be running.

There is, of course, no guarantee that the path we are on will lead to success. There never is in war. But what General Petraeus is offering is a strong, smart, and practical strategy, informed by his experience and expertise, that carries a reasonable hope of victory

from whose jaws this amendment would snatch defeat. This amendment is a surrender to terrorism. It is a victory to al-Qaida and Iran. It is an invitation to a disaster for Iraq, the Middle East, and most directly the United States of America.

Iraq is not lost. It can be won, and if it is won we will have secured a better, brighter future for the people of that country, the hope of greater stability and opportunity and peace for the people of the region, and the hope and promise of greater security for the American people. Iraq is not lost. But if we adopt this amendment it will be; so, I fear, will so much of our hope for democracy and stability in the Middle East and for our own safety from terrorism here at home. That is why I will vote against cloture and against the Levin-Reed amendment tomorrow morning.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, the American people's opposition to this war is not the political passion of a moment, as some have suggested. It is a majority, a growing majority, a thoughtful growing majority reflecting the will of the people of this country. We need 60 votes because of recalcitrance, because of political game playing, because too many of our colleagues are more interested in protecting the President than they are in protecting our troops. We know to get 60 votes we need 11 Republicans.

Many Republicans, a growing number of Republicans in this body, have spoken out against this war. They have decided that we need to change course in Iraq. The problem is simply this. It seems like almost every Tuesday Vice President CHENEY comes and speaks to the Republican lunch. The Republicans meeting in conference, having lunch, Vice President CHENEY pulls up, his limousine drops him off at the door of the Senate, he comes in and speaks to them or other administration officials. The arm twisting, the lobbying by the administration, is making it that much harder to change direction in this war. That is why it is so difficult to get to 60. That is why we want a vote, we want an up-or-down vote, we want a majority vote, because a majority vote reflects public sentiment, reflects what the voters said last fall, reflects the policy that the Iraq Study Group has suggested, that the military has advised the President, but the President simply dug in and did not listen.

Last November voters in my State of Ohio, from Galion to Gallipolis, and across this Nation shouted from the ballot boxes that we needed a new direction, that the Iraq war must end. They demanded that we refocus our efforts on securing our homeland so that the darkest day in our Nation's history, 9/11, is never repeated.

With Democrats in control of Congress this session we immediately, in January, began working to end the war. We immediately began to work implementing the full recommendations of the 9/11 Commission in order to make us safer, recommendations that will go a long way toward making this country safer. By working to end the war in Iraq and by passing the Commission's recommendation, we are executing a strategy to combat terrorism and to make our country safer.

Make no mistake, ending the war in Iraq itself is a counterterrorism strategy. Global terrorist attacks have increased sevenfold since we invaded Iraq—seven times, more than 700 percent. Our continued engagement in Iraq, frankly, is the best thing that ever happened to jihadist recruitment. We know America is a less safe country because of the war in Iraq. We know global terrorist attacks have increased sevenfold, seven times worldwide since the war in Iraq began.

Democrats brought to this Chamber not one piece of legislation to redeploy our troops out of Iraq in the safest, most orderly way possible, but many resolutions, many pieces of legislation. Each and every time either Republicans defeated the measure in Congress by threatening a filibuster or the President vetoed it in the White House—each and every time.

This week we find ourselves at the same impasse, the same struggle in this Chamber between a new direction and more of the same failed policies. Again, too many of my colleagues would rather protect the President of the United States than protect our soldiers and marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. More of the same means supporting the President, but it means something very different to Ohio families. It means more loved ones wounded, more loved ones killed. Mr. President, 156 people in my State have been killed in Iraq, 156 people. More than 1,100 Ohioans have been wounded. Ohio cannot afford more of the same.

Again, too many of my colleagues care more about protecting the President than they do about protecting our troops. Ohio families have had it with hollow promises by the President. From first declaring ''mission accomplished'' in 2003 to his visit last week in my home State of Ohio, in Cleveland, the President used grand pronouncements of success in an effort to buy more time, stay the course and buy more time; continue our involvement in this civil war and buy more time. Time and again those pronouncements were followed by increased violence and expanding chaos in Iraq. Time and again those pronouncements mean more names being added to the list of dead and wounded Americans. Mr. President, 3,617 Americans have died in the war in Iraq. At least 35,000 Americans have suffered serious injuries that will be with them and with us for 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years.

Every year I see Iraq slip further and further into a civil war with our Nation's military caught in the middle. The President sent our Nation's military into a war of choice on failed intelligence and, as we know, without proper body armor. Adding insult to injury, literally just today, a USA Today article revealed that nearly 4 years later our troops are still without the lifesaving equipment they need.

I remember before the attack, before we invaded Iraq, I was a Member of the House of Representatives. I voted against this war in October of 2002. We began questioning Paul Bremer during the beginning of 2003, before the attack. Mr. Bremer was the administrator in Iraq for the U.S. Government, the Provisional Government. We continued to focus on providing the kind of body armor for our troops and Mr. Bremer said we are doing the best we can, but we have not done very well. We have a lot to do. We still attacked that country, we still sent our troops into harm's way without that body armor.

As we discuss this issue, tonight in Baghdad it is early morning. The forecast calls for a high of 104 degrees. While our solders have some protection from the extreme heat, like water, shade, and the mini air-conditioning units, they are not protected from a far deadlier force in Iraq, the improvised explosive devices or IED bombs. The USA Today article highlighted the lack of planning to protect our soldiers riding in Humvees from the impact of IED bombs. Humvees have a very low ground clearance, a little less than a foot and a half. The bottom of a humvee is flat so when it is hit by an IED blast from the bottom, troops suffer the brunt of the explosion.

The Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle, or MRAP—the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle, on the other hand, has a 3-foot clearance, and its body is V-shaped so when the explosion happens, the explosion, if you will, is dissipated and more often than not the troops are not nearly as badly injured. The soldiers are much better protected.

The few MRAPS in theater have proven their effectiveness and clearly saved lives and clearly saved many of our soldiers and marines from injury. What infuriates me and should infuriate everyone across this Nation is that the Pentagon and the administration, similarly to back in 2002 and 2003 when they failed to work hard to provide the body armor to prepare for this war, the Pentagon and the administration again did not immediately work to fix the problem of the humvee's susceptibility to IEDs; the needless loss of life from this willful ignorance to correct the glaring problem of the unprotected humvees could have been prevented, but arrogance and stubbornness from the administration kept the administration from doing the right thing.

The President, in some sense, is proud of his stubbornness. Instead he should be ashamed of it. His stubbornness has led to a failed policy in Iraq and to a failed policy on the war on

terror. The President has yet to define victory. He has yet to tell us how many years it will take to achieve whatever his definition of victory is. Will we be in Iraq for 5 more years, 10 more years, 15 years? Will hundreds more Americans die? Will thousands more of our service men and women die? Will tens of thousands die?

The President has yet to hold himself and his administration accountable for fomenting a civil war, in breeding more global terrorism. Remember, we have seen an increase in attacks of sevenfold since the time of the attack and the beginning of this war.

The path he is wed to has simultaneously increased the threat of terrorism, reduced our nation's capability to protect against it, and made us less safe. That stubbornness is not leadership. That defensiveness is not leadership. That finger-pointing from the White House, from some of my colleagues, is not leadership. And supporting the President's strategy in Iraq, rather than supporting the troops because you support the President, is not leadership.

Blocking another vote to bring our troops home, and that is exactly what they are doing tonight by their partisan antics, by their petty political games, blocking an up-or-down vote so the American people's will can be expressed, by blocking another vote to bring our troops home, is not leadership.

Lives are at stake. Our homeland security is at stake. Global security is at stake. Last week, we learned that al-Qaida is at pre-9/11 strength. That is frightening news. Of course, it is a cause for outrage because it did not have to be that way. We also learned last week that the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is fostering the next generation of al-Qaida at an alarming rate.

What kind of signal exactly do the President and his supporters think we send by failing to secure the region where we know al-Qaida lives and trains and plans with—according to military analysts—relative freedom, the same region that served as the breeding ground for global terrorism through al-Qaida before 9/11, the same region we now know that al-Qaida trained in before the deadliest attack on our Nation's soil, the same region where Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind 9/11, not Iraq, Osama bin Laden, the same region where he is believed to be hiding, free to plot the next attack on our beloved homeland?

Over the objection of military advisers, the 9/11 Commission, and the voice of a nation, the President, again that word ''stubbornly,'' insists on staying the course with the failed policy in Iraq. Staying the course with the President's failed policy has not just forced our Government to take our eye off the ball of terrorism, it has caused us to drop it.

Again, global terrorist attacks have increased seven times since we invaded Iraq, sevenfold since we invaded Iraq. Prior to World War II, the French built the Maginot Line. Same thought the line would prevent Germany from attacking France. History proved the French wrong. The President's strategy in Iraq is the Maginot Line of the 21st century. It imperils our Nation by mistakenly focusing our attention in the wrong direction. We have dropped the ball on capturing Osama bin Laden. We have dropped the ball on securing Afghanistan. We have dropped the ball on implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, and anyone who thinks those are not signals that al-Qaida is paying attention to is surely mistaken.

Supporting the President's policy does not just fail to effectively target terrorism, it puts the bull's-eye squarely on our Nation. Ending the war in Iraq is not just about bringing our troops home. Ending the war in Iraq is not just about ensuring veterans get the health care and the benefits they have been denied, and the Presiding Officer tonight has done perhaps more than anybody in this institution about that.

Ending the war is not just about a new direction in our foreign policy. Ending the war is not about returning our focus to where it might be if our Nation and our community, our families are to remain safe. Ending the war is about reengaging full force on the war on terror to make us safer.

I applaud my Republican friends who chose to stand up to the President. More and more of them have taken steps of bravery with every vote we bring to the floor. But it is not enough. With every lost vote, we add more lines to the list of men and women lost in Iraq.

Every lost vote we add more names to the list of wounded. With every lost vote, we empower al-Qaida. We keep hearing the same rhetoric: If we do not fight the terrorists in Iraq, we will have to fight them here. Good line but bad logic. The real truth is: If we do not fight the terrorists where they are in cells around the world, in Afghanistan, and where they really are, then we will fight them here.

In the Senate, those of us committed to ending the war of choice and securing our Nation will keep fighting. I appreciate the leadership of so many of my colleagues who have shown courageous leadership on this crisis of our generation. Our fight to end the war and refocus our efforts has just begun. We want to vote, we want a majority vote to reflect the growing, thoughtful opposition to this war. A huge majority of the American people are trying to overcome the furious lobbying effort of the President and the Vice President. Our fight to end this war has just begun. We are going to change this policy. The safety of every American depends upon it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MURRAY). The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, the war in Iraq is the greatest challenge facing our country. Unfortunately, the political debate in Washington has not been conducive to finding a solution, as political divisions have hardened during the past year.

Vitriolic rhetoric and veto threats do not help us pursue a new direction. I believe the way forward must be a bipartisan approach that puts the interests of our country ahead of political gain. Our Nation needs to forge a new bipartisan strategy that will redefine the mission and set the stage for a significant but responsible withdrawal of our troops over the next year.

Fortunately, we do not have to search far and wide to find this new policy. It is already mapped out for us in the unanimous recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. This group was chaired by former Secretary of State James Baker and former Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton. It has distinguished Americans from both parties who worked hard to forge a unanimous, bipartisan consensus on the road ahead in Iraq.

The Commission's recommendations chart the path forward and remain as viable today as when they were first released last December. The Iraq Study Group report lays out three core principles. First, the report calls for a fundamental change in the mission of our military forces in Iraq, away from combat operations, and instead limited to training and equipping the Iraq security forces, conducting counterterrorism operations against al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations, and securing Iraq's borders.

The Iraq Study Group set a goal of March 2008 for withdrawing those combat forces not needed for this newly defined mission and for force protection.

Shifting the mission of our troops would require the Iraqi military and police to take responsibility for security for their country. It would allow tens of thousands of our troops to start coming home, and it would demonstrate our military commitment to Iraq is neither open-ended nor unconditional.

Second, the Iraq Study Group report recommends that American support for the Iraqi Government should be conditioned on its leaders making progress in meeting specific benchmarks, including the political reforms necessary to quell sectarian violence.

I last visited Iraq in December. After I came home, I told my constituents I had concluded a new direction in Iraq was needed and it would be a mistake to send additional troops to Baghdad, to place them in the midst of a sectarian struggle. The solution was political, not military.

I told my constituents I thought we should be moving our troops out of Baghdad and instead concentrating their effort in Anbar Province, where the local population was starting to support our efforts and joining in the fight against al-Qaida. In Anbar, the violence was not, in December and is not now, primarily sectarian, as it is in

Baghdad and the belt surrounding Baghdad; instead, in Anbar Province the fight is against al-Qaida.

The newly defined mission set forth by the Iraq Study Group in December would call for us to concentrate our efforts on counterterrorism operations, securing Iraq's borders and training the Iraqi security forces. We should not be in the midst of what is indeed a civil war in Baghdad.

Last week, the President released a progress report, a report called for by legislation that I coauthored with Senators JOHN WARNER and BEN NELSON. This report verified that the Iraqis have made, unfortunately, very little progress in achieving the most important political benchmarks. This is at a time when the Iraqis have failed to adopt the essential reforms to distribute oil revenues more equitably, to reverse debaathification, and to more fully integrate the Sunni minority into governmental power structures.

It has been our troops that have paid such a heavy price. In fact, American troops suffered more casualties during the past 3 months than at any time since this war has begun. Requiring the Iraqis to make more progress on the political reforms that were part of the strategy, as the Baker-Hamilton Commission recommended, is absolutely essential, and it is in keeping with the Warner-Collins-Nelson benchmark language incorporated into the funding bill.

Third, the Iraq Study Group urges our Government to launch a new diplomatic offensive in the region. Both the international community and Iraq's neighbors are clearly not doing enough to foster its stability, and this must change. Thus, the ISG recommendations recognize that the United States has placed too much emphasis on military actions at the expense of diplomacy. Fourteen of us, eight Democrats and six Republicans, have joined together to offer the Iraq Study Group's sound and well thought out unanimous recommendations as an amendment to the pending legislation, the Defense authorization bill.

Our amendment lays the groundwork for responsible, realistic redeployment of American combat troops and emphasizes the need for more democracy. By adopting the Iraq Study Group recommendations, the Senate can finally chart a new course and move past politics to address the most critical issue facing our country.

I have to tell you I think the debate tonight in many ways has been disheartening. To see signs put up on the Senate floor saying ''Let us vote,'' when our side has not blocked a vote on the cloture motion, we have offered to do it at any point this evening. We have offered to do it earlier today. We have offered to do it tomorrow. It has been disappointing to hear rhetoric that is clearly intended to score political points, as it is disappointing to hear the President be so inflexible in his approach.

I think the Senator from Tennessee put it well earlier this evening when he called for more flexibility on the President's part and more flexibility on the part of the Democrats, particularly the leader of the Senate.

Having vote after vote, where we fail to get to the threshold of 60 votes or even 67 votes, if necessary, to override the President's veto is not getting us anywhere. We are not moving forward. We have got to put aside such a fractious political approach to such a grave crisis.

We need to work together in a bipartisan way. By adopting the Iraq Study Group recommendations, the Senate can chart a new course and move past politics. Despite the heroic efforts of our troops, who make us all so proud, the war in Iraq has been characterized by lost opportunity after lost opportunity due to the misjudgments of this administration. I hope the Senate will not lose this opportunity to change direction in a responsible bipartisan way.

In addition to the Iraq Study Group recommendation amendment, which I am proud to cosponsor, and I salute the leadership of Senator SALAZAR and Senator ALEXANDER in bringing together a new Gang of 14, to work on this proposal, there is also another bipartisan approach that Senator BEN NELSON and I have offered as an amendment to this bill.

Let me briefly explain our proposal to our colleagues. Now, some of our colleagues are looking for a middle ground. Again, in addition to the Iraq Study Group amendment, Senator NELSON and I are proposing another attempt to find a middle ground. Our proposal would require the President to immediately transition to a new strategy. This strategy is very similar to the one laid out by the Iraq Study Group. It would move us away from combat operations and instead focus our efforts on counterterrorism operations, border security, and training of Iraqi security forces.

But it requires, and here is how it differs from the Salazar-Alexander approach, which I also support, it requires the President to immediately begin transitioning to that new strategy. Not in 120 days, not next year, not after September, but immediately. Then it sets a goal that the transition period should be completed by the first quarter of next year, by March 31, 2008.

So it sets forth a mandatory requirement for the President to immediately transition to a new strategy. I think this makes a lot of sense. There are so many people in the Senate who support a new strategy. We ought to be able to get that done, and I respectfully suggest to my colleagues that the Nelson-Collins amendment would move us quickly, the most quickly toward that new strategy.

I sincerely hope tomorrow we will see the dawn of a new approach to our strategy in Iraq. I hope very much that we will see a strong vote for the proposal offered by 14 of us, led by Senator SALAZAR and Senator ALEXANDER, to adopt the unanimous bipartisan recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. Surely, if as diverse a group as James Baker, Lee Hamilton, Larry Eagleburger, Vernon Jordan, Ed Meese, Sandra Day O'Connor, Leon Panetta, William Perry, Chuck Robb, and Alan Simpson can come together in the interest of this country, study our dilemma, study the war in Iraq, and produce a report unanimously, surely we in the Senate ought to be able to put aside our partisan concerns, our political divisions, and act together in the best interests of this country.

I hope we will do so tomorrow. I also hope we might adopt the Nelson-Collins amendment which would add a little more force to the recommendations of the changed mission put forth by the Iraq Study Group.

This is our opportunity. Let us not lose this opportunity to forge a new path, a new strategy in Iraq.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. LINCOLN). Under the previous order, the Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise in strong support of the Levin-Reed amendment. That is the amendment that, unlike the Iraq Study Group, has a date certain for changing and transitioning our mission and bringing our troops home. Maybe if the Senate had listened to the Iraq Study Group last year when it presented its report and had adopted it and moved in that direction, we would not be where we are today. I personally believe it is well past time to now suggest that it is appropriate to adopt their recommendations when what we need is a date certain.

We are here tonight to ask for a vote, not just any vote. We are here to ask for a fundamental American principle: a majority vote for majority rule. Not a supermajority vote of 60 votes. A majority vote for majority rule, the same principle that has stood our country over the test of time, the same principle that average Americans fully understand, the same principle that would reflect the reality of where the American public is as it relates to this critical issue. A majority vote for a majority rule. Not just any vote.

We are here tonight because the American people deserve an up-or-down vote on this important amendment that will finally bring an end to this mismanaged war.

The war in Iraq, in my mind, is the most pressing issue of our day, and the fact that the Republican leadership and those who join them will not allow the Senate to have a straight up-or-down vote, a simple majority vote, speaks of obstructionism and of hiding behind procedural roadblocks in order to avoid facing the American people who have called for a change of course in Iraq.

Those of us who voted against the war, as I did in the first place, against popular opinion of the time, have been vindicated by history. I say to my colleagues, history will judge the votes we

cast tomorrow, and I believe those who vote against a simple majority rule and changing the course will be judged harshly.

The President has lost the support of the American public and the confidence of the global community. The only support for his misguided policy in Iraq is a minority, a minority, in the Senate. That is why they are afraid of a simple up-or-down vote on this issue because given in this body a simple majority vote proposition, a majority of the Senate would vote to transition us out of Iraq and bring our men and women home. That is why they are afraid of the vote that we ask for.

Unfortunately, some—and I say ''some'' because I know some of our Republican colleagues have joined us in the past and will again—some of my Republican colleagues seem more interested in protecting the President than doing right, in my mind, by our troops. To the Republican leadership and those who support them, I say it is time to stop filibustering and time to start a vote, a simple majority vote for majority rule.

Maybe if more of the sons and daughters, husbands and wives, or sisters and brothers of Members of the Senate were in Iraq, some of my colleagues would not be so cavalier about filibustering an up-or-down, simple majority vote. If our loved ones were in Iraq, who among us would be content with the counsels of patience and delay? Who among us would be satisfied with another mission accomplished? Who among us would be satisfied with ''victory is around the next corner''? Who among us would be satisfied with benchmarks of which not one—not one—has been accomplished, and yet we somehow suggest that is progress years later?

After 4 years of a failed policy, it is time to stop hiding behind procedural hurdles and allow the Senate to cast a definitive vote about our future course in Iraq. A majority vote for majority rule.

The American people are waiting impatiently for the Senate to heed their calls and face the facts on the ground. It is time for a responsible change of course in Iraq. And that is exactly what the amendment on which we want a simple majority vote—let's see how people vote, a simple majority vote—does.

The Levin-Reed amendment says our forces should be out of Iraq by April 30 of next year, except those needed to protect U.S. personnel, to train Iraqi security forces and for counterterrorism activities.

Last week, the House of Representatives passed very similar legislation, sending a clear message that the time for change has come. The only obstacle left is for this body to act with a simple majority vote.

Now the Senate, once again, faces a critical vote on Iraq, and I point out, as I did a few days ago when we debated an amendment to take care of our troops—we hear all the time about ''support the troops.'' Yet we had to have a supermajority vote to simply permit the rotation of our troops to be able to have a year back at home for every year they served abroad, a proposition that even the Defense Department has as its goal. No, we couldn't have a simple majority vote on that issue; we had to have a 60-vote threshold. Support the troops?

The only way we could have done that was with bipartisan support, and we didn't get it. The only way we can stop this war is with bipartisan support. But so long as we keep having these 60-vote thresholds, Democrats have 51 votes in this body and that leaves us 9 votes short. The American people know that. That is why we want a simple majority vote for majority rule.

Despite overwhelming public support, the public is way ahead of this institution, the American people are way ahead of this institution, and growing support from some of our Republican colleagues, which I respect—Democrats do not have the 60 votes needed to stop a filibuster in the Senate.

I know that many more of our Republican colleagues have serious concerns about the war in Iraq. I have been reading about it. I have been reading in the local and national papers of so many of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle saying: We have grave reservations about where the President is continuing to take us. We believe we have to have some type of change. I urge them to listen to their inner voice. I urge them to find their moral compass. I urge them to back their strong words with meaningful votes.

A vote for Levin-Reed, a simple up-or-down vote, is a vote to transition out of Iraq, a vote to change the course, a vote to end the war.

Robert Kennedy said about the war in Vietnam:

> Past error is no excuse for its own perpetuation. Tragedy is a tool for the living to gain wisdom, not a guide by which to live.

''Past error is no excuse for its own perpetuation.''

He went on to say:

> All men make mistakes, but a good man—

And I would paraphrase in today's terms, a good woman—

> yields when [they] know [their] cost is wrong, and repairs the evil. The only sin—

The only sin—

> is pride.

This is not an issue where we can afford the sin of pride to deviate us, to take us into the appropriate course, to change the course in Iraq.

The lessons of history are poignant and instructive about today's quagmire. Rather than hiding behind a shrinking minority and procedural posturing, Republicans should listen to the American people and change the course of this failed war policy. They should stand with the American people and tell the President, even though we have given him opportunities, even though previous efforts of the Senate have given him flexibility, he has outright rejected it and, so, yes, there must be a date certain, and the message to the President by this body is if you are not going to bring our troops home, then we will.

I have heard many of my colleagues claim that what is happening now on the Senate floor is nothing more than political theater. The war in Iraq is the single greatest issue before the country and before this Senate. How many lives, how much money, how much risk to our security by being bogged down in Iraq, when we have real challenges in the world such as Iran, when we have a reconstituted al-Qaida in Afghanistan, that is the real challenge. That is the real challenge, I say to my friends. This is not about political theater. If there is political theater here, it is the sad, sad plot that the Republican leadership has weaved in creating this procedural hurdle to not permit a simple majority vote for majority rule.

I heard my distinguished colleague from Connecticut, for whom I have enormous respect, lament the proceedings as partisan. I have the deepest respect for him, but I couldn't more passionately disagree with him. This isn't about partisanship. These are deeply held views of principle—principle that moves us to take these extraordinary measures so we can get a simple majority vote for majority rule. That is what we are simply seeking tonight.

So to the Republican leadership and those who support them, I say it is time to stop filibustering and time to permit a simple majority vote to allow us to change the course in Iraq.

Today we are living with the consequences of the administration's failed policy, and only a minority of the Senate wants to stay that failed course. Over 3,600 troops have been killed in Iraq since the beginning of the war, including 87 servicemembers with ties to my home State of New Jersey. April and May was the deadliest 2-month period of the war for U.S. troops, with 230 servicemembers killed.

We have now spent over $450 billion on the war in Iraq, with a burn rate of $10 billion a month. Frankly, I never believed the administration's estimates that the so-called surge would only cost $5.6 billion. We have been misled time and time again, and these new numbers only prove once again we have been misled.

Each day we read horrific stories about the violence and tragedy on the streets of Iraq. This week officials report that dozens of Shiites were massacred by Sunni extremists during an overnight raid in Diyala Province. Yesterday, suicide car bombs in Kirkuk killed more than 80 people and injured some 150 others. It was the deadliest attack the city had seen since the beginning of the war. In fact, suicide attacks have more than doubled across Iraq from 26 in January to 58 in April.

In terms of reconstruction, measurements we all previously swore ourselves to be listening to, oil production in Iraq is still lower than it was before the war, and Baghdad is getting less than 6 hours of electricity a day, significantly less than before the war.

That is why we must proceed with a vote on the Levin-Reed amendment and bring an end to our military involvement in Iraq which has cost our country so dearly in human lives and national treasure.

Even all of the military personnel tell us we cannot have a military victory in Iraq. When I listen to General Pace say we need the Iraqis to love their children more than they hate their neighbors, that is probably a powerful truism, but it does not come through the power of military might. That is about reconciliation, confidence-building measures, revenue sharing, and participation of all Iraqi society in the Government. It does not come through the barrel of a gun to have the Iraqis love their children more than they hate their enemies.

So to the Republican leadership and those who support them, it is time to stop filibustering and time to permit us a simple majority vote for majority rule.

Let me take a minute to discuss the administration's recent report on benchmarks in Iraq which President Bush is using as a justification for the United States to stay in Iraq.

Just as some were misled into the war, I think this report is misleading. I wish to make sure everyone understands exactly what it says because I have listened to the debate and, boy, has it been mischaracterized, as far as I am concerned. I am sure not intentionally because people read the document different ways. Let me tell what it clearly says to me.

The report did not say that eight of the benchmarks had been met. Instead, the report said that satisfactory progress, a very significant distinction, has been made on only 8 of 18 benchmarks in Iraq, while the rest have not even seen—not even seen—satisfactory progress. In simple terms, none of the benchmarks were met.

Let's make it clear: None of the benchmarks were met. And when this report came out, President Bush said:

> Those who believe that the battle in Iraq is lost will likely point to the unsatisfactory performance on some of the political benchmarks. Those of us who believe that the battle in Iraq can and must be won see the satisfactory performance on several of the security benchmarks as a cause for optimism.

I want to reiterate to the President the fact that none of the benchmarks were actually met. None.

Now, let me be clear. The absolute best version of the story is that the Iraqis made some progress on some of the benchmarks. That is it. But the fact is, zero out of 18 benchmarks were met, and this is after years, and this is after changing the goalposts so that we can continue to suggest that we are making progress. If we kept the goalposts where they were supposed to be, we would have an even greater rate of failure.

So I don't see any cause for optimism for this failed strategy of escalation. Frankly, I think the President's comments represent yet another example of the administration's delusion and denial.

For years, this administration has refused to face the truth about Iraq. Let's take a look at some of the benchmarks the Bush administration told us would be met.

We were told by the end of 2006 that a provincial election law would be approved and new election laws would be put in place. But that benchmark has not been met.

We were told the Iraqis would approve a law for debaathification. But that benchmark has not been met. In fact, the Iraqi Parliament is barely functioning. It is stuck in gridlock. Even worse, one of the Bush administration's best Iraqi allies, Ahmed Chalabi, has been leading the charge—this is one of the administration's best allies who has been leading the charge—to block the debaathification legislation.

We were told the Iraqis would create a law to help restrain sectarian militias. But that benchmark has not been met. In fact, the Iraqi Government hasn't disarmed the Shia militias, and the security situation on the ground continues to rage out of control. The surge hasn't staunched the violence, and civilian casualties were actually higher in June than in February when the surge began.

We were told that the Iraqis would establish a law to regulate the oil industry and share revenues in Iraqi society. But that benchmark has not been met. In fact, the oil law is stuck in parliamentary gridlock, and it is unclear whether it actually addresses even the core issues.

We were told that by March, this past March, that the Iraqi Government was supposed to hold a referendum on constitutional amendments necessary for a government of national unity to possibly exist. But that benchmark has not been met. In fact, 3 years after the United States turned over power to the Iraqi Government, the Iraqis still don't have the constitution finished.

The Bush administration seems to think that ''satisfactory progress'' has been made on performing a constitutional review committee. But in fact this committee has had to keep extending deadlines to get their work done, and it is unclear whether they will even meet the next deadline at the end of this month.

As I said before, it is time that the administration and the President finally face the real facts. And the fact is, by invading Iraq, the President took our focus away from the war in Afghanistan—the birthplace of the Taliban, the home to al-Qaida, the land of Osama bin Laden, and the place where the attacks of September 11 were planned.

Now, nearly 6 years after those terrible attacks on the United States, the most recent National Intelligence Estimate tells us that al-Qaida is operating where? In a safe zone along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Let me repeat that. Al-Qaida is operating, according to the National Intelligence Estimate, in a safe zone along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

In fact, according to the New York Times:

> U.S. officials have warned publicly that a deal between the Pakistani government and tribal leaders allowed al-Qaida to plot and train more freely in parts of western Pakistan for the last 10 months.

It is clear that by shifting our efforts to Iraq, we have taken our eye off the original threat in Afghanistan. We cannot forget that our fight against terrorism started where it should have, in Afghanistan—an engagement that I supported—where it should have remained. But we have not yet been able to end the fight in Afghanistan.

Now, as I listened to the debate here today, some of our Republican colleagues are back to the same parroting of the same old refrains—it won't work—criticizing Democrats as being weak on defense. It is we who have consistently called for finishing the job we started in Afghanistan, and bringing Osama bin Laden and his followers to justice, and as far as I am concerned, to have him meet his maker. It was a Democratic Senator who offered a higher ransom on Osama bin Laden's head. It is Democrats, through the supplemental appropriations bill, who funded the resources for those men and women whom we supposedly are going to stand by so that they would have the plated jackets that they needed, and whom we sent into war without having the resources they needed, the vehicles to protect their lives as they seek to pursue their mission, the opportunity to make sure that a grateful nation says we are grateful not just on Memorial Day, marching in a parade, or on Veterans Day, going to an observance, which we should, but in how we treat those men and women in their injuries, in their disabilities, and for those who commit the ultimate sacrifice, in how we take care of their survivors. That is what Democrats did when they achieved the majority in this institution.

So that old refrain, my friends, that Democrats are weak on defense, that dog won't hunt.

I joined a rally earlier tonight outside the Capitol with Iraqi war veterans. In my mind, no one—no one—has a greater right to question their Government and to say, as they did, that it is time to change the course in Iraq and bring their fellow soldiers home, and that is what they said tonight. They hold the high ground in any debate.

Afghanistan was the right place to pursue the national security of the

United States. It was in Afghanistan that the murderers of September 11 were located. We had Osama bin Laden pinned down in the mountains of Tora Bora. But instead of having a large contingent of the best trained, most equipped, most technologically advanced military in the world go after him, we outsourced the job to the warlords. We gave them money, and they put the money in their pockets and they let bin Laden get away.

Many of us have been horrified as we have watched the resurgence of the Taliban, the new threats of al-Qaida in Afghanistan, and the increasing poppy cultivation. A few years ago, I talked about the possibility of the Iraqitization of Afghanistan, and now we see some of those fears coming true.

Just last month, Afghan security forces found a new type of sophisticated roadside bomb, one that is very similar to that being used in Iraq. Afghans, and our troops in Afghanistan, face the daily horror of roadside bombs targeting civilians or coalition forces.

The Taliban continues its battle to terrorize the Afghan people. As the New York Times article said last week:

> Shootings, beheadings, burnings, and bombings: These are the tools of intimidation used by the Taliban and others to shut down hundreds of Afghanistan's public schools. To take aim at education is to make war on the government.

Afghanistan now produces 92 percent of the world's poppy, and it has a record crop again this year. Again, according to the New York Times:

> Not so long ago, we trumpeted Afghanistan as a success, a country freed from tyranny and al-Qaeda. But as the Taliban's grip continues to tighten, threatening Afghanistan's future and the fight against terrorism, Americans and Afghans are frequently asking what went wrong.

My friends, what went wrong is that instead of finishing the mission in Afghanistan, the President took us to Iraq. Of course, we remember all the reasons why: weapons of mass destruction, uranium from Niger—this in a State of the Union speech before the entire Congress, none of it true. The battle in Afghanistan, the battle against al-Qaida, the Taliban, against terrorism is far from over. Yet the United States is still held hostage by the President's war in Iraq—a war that we were led into based on a false premise, with false promises, with no plan to win the peace and no plan to succeed.

The President is fond of evoking Franklin Roosevelt and our noble mission in World War II when he talks about Iraq. But he must have forgotten that when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt didn't run off and invade China. That would have made no sense. Just like our going to Iraq made no sense because we dropped the ball in Afghanistan. The failures in Iraq, coupled with the reinvigoration of al-Qaida in Afghanistan, underscore the fiasco of the Bush administration's decision to take its focus off Afghanistan, its disastrous war policy, and the consequences of its ''stay the course'' mentality. They took their eye off the ball and created a quagmire in Iraq.

We didn't have al-Qaida in Iraq. We now have elements of al-Qaida in Iraq, but we did not have al-Qaida in Iraq before we invaded. Now we are paying the price in the form of less security and a beefed-up terrorist network. Maybe Secretary Chertoff's infamous gut feeling about an increased terror threat was caused by knowing that Osama bin Laden and his terrorist allies are still out there plotting and planning thousands of miles away from Iraq—thousands of miles away from Iraq.

Madam President, let me conclude by saying that the President says that the only role for Congress is to provide a blank check for his failed war policy. He is so wrong. He is so wrong. Time to reread the Constitution. This body's responsibility is not to blindly sign a blank check to the President for a failed policy. We have a responsibility to the American people as fiduciaries both in terms of national treasure and lives. Most importantly, we have a responsibility to the men and women in uniform to do the right thing and stand up to the President's failed policy so that we may give them a mission worthy—worthy—of their sacrifice. We should honor the troops who continue to sacrifice and shed blood not by being silent, not by being hoarded like sheep, not by signing on to a blank check, and not by being complicit in the President's failed war.

I have heard some of our colleagues on the other side cry that we are fighting for freedom in Iraq, but here in America, here tonight, we have a tyranny of a minority in the Senate who want to use the procedures of the Senate, in my mind in a way that is totally unacceptable, to thwart the will of the majority of the Senate, and, more importantly, the majority of the American people.

We want a vote—not just any vote, a simple majority vote for majority rule. The amendment before us reflects the reality on the ground and the will of the American people. It changes the course in Iraq by setting a responsible timetable for our troops to leave. How many more lives—how many—I hope we all go home before tomorrow's vote and say to ourselves, how many more lives, how many more tens of billions of dollars, how much more chaos? We have heard about chaos. What will happen, how much more chaos can unfold than that which we see unfolding as we have 160,000 troops there?

Years from now, we will come to the same conclusion. Or we can act with courage tomorrow in a vote, a simple majority vote, and by doing so we will be in a position to meet our national security challenges and our national interests. Our brave troops have answered the call of duty. Let's now answer the call to do what is right by them.

It is clear to me that the President continues to live in a world where the reality in Iraq never collides with his fantasy of what is happening there. It is time for the President, and a minority in the Senate who support him, to give the American people a chance for a majority vote, for a majority rule. The American people have awoken way before the Senate, and they want the nightmare to end. The American people know it is time to responsibly withdraw from Iraq. The House of Representatives voted to do so, and it is time for the Senate to finally vote for a responsible withdrawal from Iraq.

And so we close again. It is time for a simple majority vote for majority rule.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate July 17, 2007:

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SEAN R. MULVANEY, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, VICE JOHN MARSHALL, RESIGNED.

THE JUDICIARY

ROBERT J. CONRAD, JR., OF NORTH CAROLINA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT, VICE JAMES DIXON PHILLIPS, JR., RETIRED.

CATHARINA HAYNES, OF TEXAS, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT, VICE HAROLD R. DEMOSS, JR., RETIRED.

SHALOM D. STONE, OF NEW JERSEY, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE THIRD CIRCUIT, VICE SAMUEL A. ALITO, JR., ELEVATED.

JOHN DANIEL TINDER, OF INDIANA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SEVENTH CIRCUIT, VICE DANIEL A. MANION, RETIRING.

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

To be major general

BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT R. ALLARDICE, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL HERBERT J. CARLISLE, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM A. CHAMBERS, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL KATHLEEN D. CLOSE, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES R. DAVIS, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL JACK B. EGGINTON, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL DAVID W. EIDSAUNE, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL ALFRED K. FLOWERS, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL MAURICE H. FORSYTH, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL MARKE F. GIBSON, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL PATRICK D. GILLETT, JR., 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANK GORENC, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES P. HUNT, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL LARRY D. JAMES, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM N. MCCASLAND, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL KAY C. MCCLAIN, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT H. MCMAHON, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM J. REW, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL KIP L. SELF, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL LARRY O. SPENCER, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT P. STEEL, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES A. WHITMORE, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL BOBBY J. WILKES, 0000
BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT M. WORLEY II, 0000

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 624 AND 3064:

To be major

MAZEN ABBAS, 0000
MARIE ADAMS, 0000
SYED AHMED, 0000
EDGARDO ALICEA, 0000
MUSTAFA M. ALIKHAN, 0000
SHANE ANDERSON, 0000
TERRENCE M. ANDERSON, 0000
JARED M. ANDREWS, 0000
GREGORY K. APPLEGATE, 0000
NORRIS A. BALDWIN, 0000
BRIAN R. BARHORST, 0000
DINGANE BARUTI, 0000
ROGER BAUTISTA, 0000
RUSSELL BEAR, 0000
STEPHEN BECKWITH, 0000
JENNIFER L. BELL, 0000
JESSICA L. BELL, 0000
CHAD L. BENDER, 0000
TRISHA K. BENDER, 0000
JASON W. BENNETT, 0000