Mr. President, I rise to offer a simple proposition:

Congress should act like a coequal branch of Government and vote on

whether to keep American troops in Iraq for at least 3 more years. Late

last month, the President told the American people that it is his

intent to keep American soldiers in Iraq through the end of his term in

office. He has never before made such a sweeping commitment. When the

Senate voted in October of 2002 to send troops to Iraq, few Americans

believed then that the U.S. military would be in Iraq in 2006, let

alone 2009 or beyond. Based on what the Bush administration said then,

Americans would be justified in thinking that by now Iraq would be free

and democratic. Based on what the Bush administration said then,

Americans would be justified in thinking that by now Iraq would be

stable and self-supporting. Based on what the Bush administration said

then, Americans would be justified in thinking that by now the vast

majority of U.S. forces, if not all of them, would be safely back home.

Unfortunately, the rosy forecast put out by the White House and the

Pentagon in 2002 perished in the harsh reality of Iraq.

The failure to plan for the post-war period has thus far created less

security for the world, greater heartache for Iraq, and extraordinary

costs for America.

As of today, neither the American people nor the Congress knows how

the President intends to get American troops out of Iraq. Instead,

virtually every day, the administration offers a new theory for how

discouraging events on the ground in Iraq are actually positive signs.

Here is what is indisputable: 2,348 American soldiers are dead,

17,469 are injured, and 262 billion taxpayer dollars have been spent.

If our troops remain in Iraq for at least 3 more years, how many more

will die, how many more will be injured? How many more hundreds of

billions of dollars will it cost?

By all accounts, the insurgency remains strong and is constantly

attacking and killing American soldiers, Iraqi soldiers, and Iraqi

civilians. Every day there is another bombing, another brutal image on

the TV that reflects the chaos that passes for an average day in Iraq.

Sectarian violence is rampant. The ethnic strife is so grave that

Shiites and Sunnis living in mixed neighborhoods are fleeing for the

safety of ethnic enclaves.

In recent months, there have been more and more groups of bodies

found--hands bound, shot in the back of the head or beheaded--and many

Iraqis have come to believe that their own Iraqi Interior Ministry is

participating in these death squad-style killings.

According to Ambassador Khalilzad, the ``potential is there'' for

all-out civil war. That, my friends, is an understatement. As former

Prime Minister Allawi concedes, a low-level civil war is already being

waged in Iraq.

The so-called ``enduring bases'' that the Pentagon has built in Iraq

certainly create the appearance that the Bush administration intends

for the United States to occupy Iraq indefinitely, unnecessarily

fostering ill-will among the Iraqi population and throughout the Arab

world.

Oil production, household fuel availability, and electricity

production are lower than they were 2 years ago. Iraqis have

electricity half of each day. About 32 percent of Iraqis are

unemployed.

The list of problems that plague Iraq goes on and on.

Supporters of the war tout the Iraqi forces that are standing up and

taking responsibility for security. Yet it has been reported that not a

single Iraqi security force battalion can operate without U.S.

assistance. The Iraqi police force is plagued by absenteeism and

militia infiltration. The level of incompetence is high enough that

U.S. forces are reluctant to hand over their best weapons to the

Iraqis.

You will also hear supporters of the war point to the three elections

as proof of progress. Yes, there have been elections. But as the

current impasse makes clear, elections are just the beginning. And

while those elected have been deliberating for the past 3 months,

unable to reach consensus over the makeup of the new Iraqi Government,

insurgents have been exploiting the power vacuum to kill, to maim, and

to instill terror and fear.

Supporters of the war will also point to our reconstruction efforts.

But billions of reconstruction dollars have been misused, misspent, or

lost by American contractors, like Halliburton, and Iraqi ministries,

including the Ministry of Oil.

While in Iraq recently, as a member of the Senate Select Committee on

Intelligence, I sat down with representatives of the Oil Ministry to

discuss the issue of graft. After I repeatedly pointed to independent

analyses documenting the serious corruption problems within the Iraqi

oil sector, the Iraqi officials finally acknowledged that there were

``small'' problems with graft in this sector. Considering that oil

accounts for more than 90 percent of the country's revenues, this ought

to be extremely disturbing to Congress and people all across America.

Just as the President made the case to go to war, he owes it to

Congress and the American people to come to Congress and lay out his

plan and his budget for achieving a lasting peace in Iraq.

Congress owes it to the American people and the institution to vote.

If the President refuses to come to Congress in the coming weeks with

his plan and his budget to win the peace in Iraq, Congress owes it to

the American people to vote up or down on whether to keep American

troops in Iraq for at least 3 more years.

The President's case for winning the peace in Iraq should address

these concerns:

First, how the President can help make the Iraqis self-reliant so

that they can defeat the deadly insurgency.

Second, how the President intends to help Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish

leaders break the political impasse so that they can form a unity

government.

Third, how the President intends to pull the Iraqi people back from

the brink of all-out civil war and the specter of another Rwanda or

Darfur.

Fourth, how the President intends to help rebuild the Iraqi

infrastructure and ensure that Iraqis have access to basic services

like electricity and clean water.

And fifth, how the President intends to bring the troops home from

Iraq.

If need be, to be sensitive to national security matters, I would not

be averse to the Senate moving into Executive Session to consider

portions of the President's plan and his budget for securing the peace

in Iraq.

I simply ask the President to come to Congress and describe his plan

and his budget specifically, and let Congress consider its potential to

succeed before the Congress, with its silence, consents to 3 more years

of very costly involvement in Iraq.

The vote I call for today, if held, won't be about cutting-and-

running. It won't be about who comes up with the best spin. It will be

about holding the President and Congress accountable. The vote will

hold the President accountable for presenting a plan and a budget for

securing the peace. And the vote will hold Congress accountable by

making it finally act like a co-equal branch of government.

I yield the floor.