Mr. President, an historic vote was announced in the

House Chamber moments ago. By a vote of 246 to 182, the House of

Representatives, in a bipartisan roll call vote, has approved the

resolution relative to the President's call for escalation of the

number of troops serving in Iraq. That resolution is fewer than 60

words in length, and I believe it should be read into the Record. This

is a resolution which we are hoping to bring to the Senate floor

tomorrow so that the debate can begin in this Chamber. It reads:

It is unembellished, it is straightforward, and it states a position.

Those who agree with this resolution, as I do, should be heard. Those

who disagree and believe we should escalate the number of troops in

this war have a right to be heard as well. That is the nature of this

institution. It is the nature of our democracy.

For the Republicans to continue to threaten a filibuster to stop the

debate in the Senate so that Members of the Senate cannot come forward

and express themselves and vote on this issue is wrong. It is unfair.

It is inconsistent with the reason we ran for office. We were asked by

the people kind enough to entrust us with this responsibility to face

the issues of our times, to address those issues in a responsible

manner, to have a civilized debate on the

floor of the Senate, and to take a vote and take a stand. We are

expected to do that.

We are not expected to waffle and weave and avoid the obvious. This

is the issue of the moment. It is the issue of our time. With over

130,000 American soldiers' lives on the line, it is unacceptable that

the minority would stop us from debating this issue. It is unacceptable

to our troops and to their families who wait anxiously to know what

their fate will be. It is unacceptable to the rest of the Nation, which

expects the Senate to be a full partner in congressional debate.

It takes 60 votes to bring a measure to the floor in the Senate. On

the Democratic side, with one absence by illness, we have 50. We need

the cooperation of the Republicans to even debate the issue. They have

made it clear in pronouncements on the floor and in press conferences

they are going to stop this debate at any cost. They are prepared to

filibuster this measure so we cannot have a debate and a vote on this

critical issue. That is wrong. It is inconsistent with the reason we

ran for office and the reason this institution exists.

We have to face the obvious. Since the decision was made by the

United States of America to give President Bush this authorization of

force, we have seen horrible results.

Mr. President, 3,132 of our best and bravest soldiers have given

their lives, thousands have been seriously injured, hundreds of

billions of dollars of taxpayers' money have been spent in pursuit of

this war, with no end in sight. Our soldiers did their job and did it

well--deposed a dictator and gave the Iraqis an opportunity for the

first time in their history to stand and govern themselves and guide

their nation into the future.

Instead, we have seen this situation disintegrate into a civil war,

and we have watched our soldiers caught in the crossfire of a battle

that started 1,400 years ago among followers of the Islamic faith. That

is not what America bargained for. That is why the majority of the

American people believe we need to change course, we need a new

direction, and we need to bring our troops home. We need to tell the

President that the escalation of this war and the escalation of the

troops is the wrong policy at this moment in history.

For this Senate to speak, we need to engage in a debate, a debate

which leads to a vote. There are choices before us. This choice, which

I support, tells the President we disagree with his policy. It joins

with the House of Representatives, which made the same decision on a

bipartisan basis. We have offered to Senator McCain, a Republican from

Arizona, an opportunity to bring his position forward in support of

adding more troops in Iraq. That is the fair parameter of a good

debate. But sadly the Republican minority has said they will deny us

that opportunity.

I hope those who believe it is important for the Senate to engage in

this debate will contact their Members of the Senate as quickly as

possible and let them know the vote tomorrow at 1:45 in the afternoon

here on the Senate floor is a historic vote, a vote of great

importance. Every Member should be here. Every Member should vote.

Every Member should understand the nature of this institution. The

reason we serve is to give voice to the people we represent on the

issues of our time. There is no more compelling and timely issue than

this war in Iraq.

I yield the floor.