Mr. President, I doubt I will use it all, but I thank the

Presiding Officer very much.

Mr. President, I am here to address S.J. Res. 9. I am glad we have

gotten to a point where we can debate this war in Iraq and vote. That

is what we are all sent here to do. This war did not start yesterday.

We are 4 years into this bloody war, at a cost of $2 billion a week,

monetarily, and nearly $500 billion since we started 4 years ago. More

importantly, we have lost nearly 3,200 of our Nation's best people.

Soldiers, sailors, and marines have made the ultimate sacrifice; 17

from my home State of Montana. Twenty-four thousand more have been

seriously wounded. An entire generation in this country has been marked

by the injuries in this battlefield.

Yesterday, the Pentagon admitted something we have known for a long

time: that our troops are caught in the midst of a civil war. The

administration has begun to escalate this war with 21,000 more troops.

This idea is not a new one. During this war, four previous surges have

all failed. It is time for a different direction. It is time for a

drawdown of our troops.

As unclear as the President's plan for Iraq has been, our mission for

our troops is more blurred. The original mission was to find weapons of

mass destruction, to topple Saddam Hussein, to train the Iraqi troops,

and to turn Iraq into a model to transform the Middle East.

Our troops have done an incredible job. They and their families have

given far more than most of us can imagine. It truly is time now to

take a different direction. Our troops need a plan for success and a

clear mission. The current plan of ``stay the course'' has failed. We

now have an open commitment with no end in sight. We need a new

direction, and we owe it not only to our troops but we owe it to the

people of this country.

I strongly support the legislation put forth by Majority Leader Reid.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this measure. It is a good first step--

finally--to put an end to this war. Also, it is a good first step to

the political and diplomatic solution this war needs to have happen to

end this war.

This measure directly addresses my biggest concerns in Iraq. I

support the legislation because it is a first step. We can begin

redeployment of troops with the goal of removing most of those U.S.

troops by March 31, 2008. It requires Iraqis to take an active role in

their future, which is critically important. Also, as was pointed out

last week, we cannot win every conflict with bullets. This forces Iraq

to move forward toward a political and diplomatic solution.

This legislation focuses our mission and responsibly ends the war

within 1 year, and after March 31, 2008, remaining American troops will

still be there to protect American and coalition interests, to still

continue to train these Iraqi forces, and, most importantly, to seek

out and bring the terrorists to justice.

The fact is, this war has taken our eye off the war on terror. Osama

bin Laden still runs free. We do not know where he is. I wholeheartedly

support this legislation and will vote for it. The combined effort of

this legislation will allow Iraq to stand on its own two feet. I urge

my colleagues to look beyond partisan politics and vote for a long

overdue change of course for this 4-year-old war. We cannot afford this

war monetarily or from a people standpoint. It is time to pass S.J.

Res. 9.

Thank you, Mr. President.