Madam President, I, too, rise to talk about this very

important matter we are debating and voting on today, the situation in

Iraq.

First, I want to say hallelujah, we are finally having a full, open

debate and a range of votes. That is exactly what I have been pushing

for, pleading for, asking for, along with so many of my colleagues on

the Republican side. I am very glad finally we do have a full and fair

and open debate, with the ability to cast votes on measures we deem

very important, and specifically the Gregg resolution about supporting

our troops in the field.

Secondly, I want to express real reservations about the Reid

resolution, which we will also be voting on today.

The situation in Iraq is very tough. We need to make a final push,

and certainly the biggest part of that push does need to be strong

action by the Iraqi Government. We need benchmarks and pressure on the

Iraqis to do the right thing. I specifically talked

about that. But the Reid resolution does some things I believe we

absolutely must not do. Specifically, it sets very precise and

complicated and cumbersome dates certain. I believe that is much more

useful as a message to the enemy and a help to the enemy than a roadmap

for us.

In addition, I think the Reid resolution clearly micromanages the

war. It clearly oversteps our bounds as a legislative body by taking on

the responsibilities and the management and the function of the

Commander-in-Chief. Therefore, for that reason, I think that aspect of

the Reid resolution is, No. 1, a bad idea, but, No. 2, very possibly

unconstitutional.

I will be voting against that Reid resolution. But again, I thank

everyone who finally, after weeks and weeks of talk--finally--gave us

the opportunity for these votes and for a vote on the Gregg resolution

and other important matters.

The third and final point I want to make goes to the path,

unfortunately, I think we are headed down with some of this language. I

think this is very unfortunate, and I think this path and where it is

headed, in my opinion, is something we must all work to avoid. Let me

explain what I mean.

Senator Reid has made it perfectly clear he will put forward his

resolution today with all of those complicated dates and timetables and

what-ifs and benchmarks. Again, I have problems with that; I will vote

no. But Senator Reid has also made clear he will also put forward the

exact same substance in the context of the emergency supplemental

appropriations bill to fund our men and women in uniform in the field

in Iraq.

Now, why is that a problem? Well, it is a problem for the following

reasons: that emergency supplemental bill is needed, as I just said, to

fund the men and women in uniform in the field right now, under fire,

risking their lives in Iraq.

We have all said over and over and over that no matter how we feel

about the war, no matter what we put forward as the proper policy on

the war effort, we would give our men and women in uniform in the field

what they need to do their job and defend themselves. The problem is

this Reid language, particularly the threat to put it on the emergency

supplemental appropriations bill, threatens to cut that funding off

because that language, if it gets on the bill, will, first of all,

delay debate and implementation of the bill, and secondly, if it is in

the final version of that spending bill, it will absolutely--

absolutely--produce a veto by the President of the United States. He

cannot agree to that language because of his position on the proper

path forward, and no President can agree to that language because of

the constitutional power of the President as the Commander in Chief.

That will further delay this emergency spending bill and further delay

getting necessary funds and equipment to troops in the field.

The military has said very clearly we need to act by April 15 so

those funds and that equipment can get to the field starting in early

May. Our troops are counting on it. They are waiting for it. These are

men and women in uniform, in the field, under fire right now. But,

again, this strategy and this language of Senator Reid will make it

very likely that won't happen and will make it very likely this whole

matter and this whole spending to get to our troops in the field will

be significantly delayed. That is not funding men and women in uniform.

That is not supporting our troops in the field. What that is doing is

refraining from supporting them, slowly bleeding away the resources,

the equipment, and the money they need to do their job.

It is one thing to say: New troops, you are not going anywhere. You

stay right here. We are having this debate. But it is quite another to

slowly bleed and endanger troops in the field. Yet this is the path

that I am very afraid we are embarking on with the Reid language,

particularly if it is put on the emergency supplemental appropriations

bill.

In closing, let me say, we have all said on this floor, virtually to

a person in the U.S. Senate, that no matter what we think about the

war, no matter what we think about the right path forward in the war,

we will not endanger our troops in the field. We better think long and

hard about the path some would adopt because they are beginning to do

just that. We can't have that. We need to give our brave, smart,

courageous men and women in the field already the money, the equipment,

the resources they need to do their job. They are literally under fire

there. We cannot bleed away what they need in the field, quickly,

slowly, or anything in between.

Again, I am very concerned that is the path Senator Reid and some

others would put us on.

So, thankfully, we are having this full and open debate today. We

will be having votes today. I believe the most important vote is on the

Gregg resolution. I will proudly vote for that in support of our men

and women in uniform in the field, and I will do everything I can to

avoid slowly, quickly, or anything in between bleeding resources, money,

and equipment away from what those brave men and women whom we have

already put in the field need to defend themselves and to conduct their

mission.

Madam President, I yield the floor.