Madam President, we are brought back to the floor again

this week to continue the debate on Iraq and whether the United States

should begin to pull our troops out of Iraq. Yet again the majority

leader has

brought legislation to the floor of the Senate that will set arbitrary

timelines for U.S. withdrawal, sending a signal to the Iraqi people

that we are poised to abandon them; while at the same time sending a

strong message to our enemies that to defeat the United States, all

they need to do is wait us out. That kind of policy will allow our

current and future enemies to dictate our foreign policy for us, not

the other way around.

General Petraeus has now only had weeks to implement his new strategy

for stabilizing Baghdad. After a unanimous vote of confirmation, the

majority party now wants to send a signal to General Petraeus that we

not only have no confidence in his abilities to stabilize key parts of

Iraq but that we have no faith in our soldiers ability as well. That is

not a statement I am willing to send to our soldiers in combat. The

majority would rather see 535 generals leading the way towards

stability and security in Iraq and the greater Middle East, and I do

not see that strategy as an effective way to run a war.

I cannot stress enough that our conflict in Iraq does not stop at the

borders. Iraq is a central country in a very dangerous region of the

world. Bordered by Iran and Syria, which are both contributing to the

violence in Iraq, will clearly see a premature U.S. troop withdraw in

Iraq as a symbol that our resolve is not strong enough to stop their

ambitions for regional dominance.

A premature withdrawal from Iraq will almost certainly lead to a

massive humanitarian crisis, which would leave hundreds of thousands of

Iraqi civilians at the hands of murderous militias. I would ask of my

colleagues who favor immediate withdrawal from Iraq, are they willing

to stand idly by as hundreds of thousands of Iraqis are raped, beaten

and murdered? I would assume the answer would be no, paving the way for

an even greater peacekeeping force to be deployed to Iraq, and making

the work to stabilize that country infinitely more difficult.

I think it is important for the American people to know that the

roadblocks put up in the Senate regarding nonbinding votes on Iraq were

not put up by the Republican minority. I have stood on this floor on

more than one occasion debating the war this year. We have had, and

will continue to have, full debates on the floor of the Senate

regarding Iraq, but it is up to the majority leader whether those

debates will be fair debates. I was pleased to see that an amendment

offered by Senator Gregg will be allowed an up-or-down vote. This

resolution clearly states that the Congress will not cut off any

funding for soldiers we send into combat. An overwhelming majority of

both the House and Senate voted to send these troops into war, and we

all the responsibility to ensure that any American soldier in harm's

way will have the full support of their government.

The majority party continuously denies planning or calling for

defunding this war, and thus the troops, but several Democratic

Senators and Congressmen have spoken publicly about their desire to

eliminate funding for our soldiers. That is a very dangerous game to

play, when Members will allow antiwar politics to convince Members of

Congress that they should cut off funding for American troops on the

battlefield.

Now, it is very clear that there is no single military operation that

can bring stability to Iraq by itself. We need the Iraqi government to

stand up on its own two feet and lead their country. We need an Iraqi

economy to be strong and viable on its own in order to give the Iraqi

people a choice between turning towards insurgent militias and

terrorist organization, but instead to start new businesses and make

constructive contributions to their society. However, without stability

in the capital city, there can be no stable government and there can be

no economic stability. The reinforcements called for by General

Petraeus, which will assist in stabilizing Baghdad, are working to

lower the levels of violence, and will pave the way for economic and

government stability.

I, like all of my colleagues, want nothing else but to have our

troops home and out of harm's way. That said, we should not be in such

a rush to leave Iraq that we leave that country in shambles, creating a

haven for terrorism and a humanitarian crisis that could rival or

surpass any we have seen before.

We are at a critical juncture in this war. The American people are

questioning our policies in Iraq, mistakes have been made over the

three plus years we have been in Iraq, and I will readily admit that.

But I do not believe that we are at a point of failure. The majority

party is frustrated with our progress in Iraq, but I firmly believe

that Congress micromanaging this war is the most detrimental policy our

country could pursue. The Congress should not be in the business of

setting arbitrary withdrawal timetables, setting troop levels,

threatening funding for our soldiers, or sending messages to our

soldiers that we have no faith in their mission.

The Senate is yet again going to be voting on a series of binding and

nonbinding resolutions that will send a strong message to our soldiers,

the American people, and to our enemies. I hope that my colleagues will

speak in a loud voice of support to our soldiers; a resolute voice to

the American people that we will not be defeated by radical insurgents

and terrorist groups; and a firm voice to our enemies that we will not

be defeated. Our national security, and that of our allies, is at

stake, and I will not cast a vote to pull our troops out of Iraq

prematurely and allow Iraq to become a base of operations for strikes

against this country.