Madam President, today the Senate confronts the tragic

situation facing us in Iraq. No Member of the Senate, the

administration, or our Armed Forces is happy with where we stand in

Iraq. A mission that began with the great success of our men and women

in uniform has bogged down through no fault of theirs. With heavy

hearts the Congress, after hearing the people speak in November, must

now force a change in our policy in Iraq. We can no longer allow an

open-ended commitment to Iraq that endangers our forces while allowing

Iraqi politicians to delay the difficult choices they must make.

S.J. Res. 9, which I support, calls on the President to begin the

redeployment of our troops out of Iraq. After 4 long years they have

been stretched to the breaking point. They now referee a bloody civil

war that bears no resemblance to the original conflict we authorized

them to engage in. The time for military solutions is over, and the

difficult work of political compromise lies before the Iraqis with

little our soldiers can do to help.

The resolution does not require a rapid pullout, however, but gives

time for a measured withdrawal that will protect our troops while

providing support to the new Iraqi government. It sets March 2008 as a

goal for our combat troops to be gone from Iraq--5 years after they

first entered the country--but it provides flexibility if that is not

possible. The March withdrawal goal is also in line with what the Iraq

Study Group believed was appropriate.

This reasonable goal will give Iraq's politicians time to make the

difficult decisions they need to make about power sharing and dividing

oil revenues. It will also give our troops time to complete the

training and equipping of additional Iraqi police and security forces.

Five years is plenty of time to help a new nation toward democracy--or

prove that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside. Either way we

cannot ask our military to continue their mission indefinitely.

Critics of the resolution believe that withdrawing from Iraq will

damage our national security, but I disagree. The ongoing conflict in

Iraq is hurting our image in the world, it is hurting our economy, and

it is hurting our military. This war is no longer protecting us, but

according to our own intelligence community it is encouraging

terrorists to take up arms against us. Our presence has kicked off a

vicious circle of violence that makes us less secure--not more. We need

to close the circle and end this cycle of violence.

We all want a stable and peaceful Iraq, but it is time to recognize

that the U.S. alone cannot achieve that goal. We need the help of the

Iraqi people and the assistance of Iraq's neighbors. If we work

together Iraq can get on its feet and repair the sectarian divide. But

if we continue on our current path, bearing the burden by ourselves,

the cycle of violence will erode our good efforts. It is time for a

change. It is time for us to shift the burden to the Iraqis and help

them carry it forward.