Madam President, I rise today to discuss the S.J. Res. 9

dealing with troop withdrawals from Iraq.

While this nonbinding resolution is different from the resolution we

debated last month, its purpose is still the same. It will micromanage

the war and send a detrimental message to both our troops and our

enemies.

That is why I voted against cloture on the motion to proceed to the

resolution and why I will vote no on its final passage. I believe that

we must give the President's new strategy for Iraq a chance to work

before we begin criticizing it.

At this time, we ought to be sending a clear message of support for

our troops and for ensuring that they have the necessary supplies and

resources to carry out their mission. Unfortunately, we cannot seem to

see beyond our political differences to do this and instead want to

attack the President's Iraq plan no matter what the consequences of our

actions would be.

Just a few weeks ago on January 26, the Senate unanimously--

unanimously--confirmed GEN David Petraeus to be commander of the

multinational forces in Iraq. General Petraeus supports the President's

new strategy in Iraq and has embarked on a mission that both the

President and the Senate selected him to do.

I would like to point out to my colleagues the irony, as well as the

inconsistency, in the choice this resolution is presenting to this

body. With the newest Iraq resolution, we are once again being asked to

disapprove of the very mission we unanimously confirmed General

Petraeus to execute. This resolution asks Senators and not General

Petraeus to direct the activities in Iraq. But Congress is not the

commander in chief, and we should not be dictating military strategy.

The resolution sets a specific date for the beginning of the

withdrawal of our troops from Iraq. This withdrawal would occur even if

there is progress on the ground in Iraq or our allies believe our

presence is still necessary. This resolution allows politics to be the

deciding factor of how we manage a war.

Passage of this resolution would show to the world that our will can

easily be stripped by terrorists if they just wait it out.

If General Petraeus, who is a friend of mine, comes back to Congress

and tells us that the President's new strategy is not working, then I

am prepared to change our course. But we need to give it a chance to

work.

We have already begun to see some successes based on recent events

and reports from General Petraeus. Sectarian killings have been lower

in Baghdad over the past several weeks than in the previous months.

There is less sectarian displacement in Baghdad neighborhoods allowing

families to return home and Sunni insurgent leaders have renewed talks

with top U.S. officials about political accommodation.

I realize these successes are small and it is too early to tell

whether they will lead to significant changes in the future, but we now

have proof that this strategy could work if given the chance.

We have also begun to see a positive response from the Iraqi people.

Just 2 weeks ago, the Iraqi council approved the foundation of a

hydrocarbon bill which is a oil revenue-sharing measure with the Iraqi

people and the provinces of Iraq. The legislation is soon going to the

assembly. For the first time in the history of their country, the

people of Iraq are on the doorstep of having equity in oil

distribution.

Despite these successes and unanimously confirming our new commander

in Iraq, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would like to

declare failure. They would like to tie General Petraeus's hands in a

way that would make achieving his mission impossible. I do not believe

that pulling the rug out from underneath our top commander in Iraq is a

plan for success. Rather, I believe that we should focus the current

debate on what we can do to support General Petraeus and the brave

young men and women in Iraq to accomplish this critical mission. I will

continue to do whatever I can to ensure that our troops and mission

succeeds.

Failure in Iraq is not an option. It would not only jeopardize our

own national security but that of the region as a whole.

When this motion to micromanage the war in Iraq comes to vote, I urge

my colleagues to oppose it. Remember, we have only one commander in

chief, not 535 generals who make war plans from the floor of the

Congress.