Mr. President, I also wish to thank the majority

leader for his remarks about circuit court judges. We all know the

confirmation of circuit court judges became unnecessarily, it seems to

me and I think seems to him, contentious at various times in recent

years. I think we are off to a good start this year.

Each of the last three Presidents ended his term with the U.S. Senate

in the hands of the opposition party. Each of these last three

Presidents received an average of 17 circuit court judicial

confirmations during those last 2 years even though the Senate was in

the hands of the opposition party.

As Senator Reid has indicated, the President has not forwarded

several nominations that were contentious in the last session, and I

thank the majority leader for his indication that we will move forward

with Randy Smith, who is the nominee for the Ninth Circuit, before the

Lincoln recess. That is an indication of good faith on his part, which

is greatly appreciated by me and others on our side.

With regard to Iraq, as the majority leader indicated, we continue to

be in discussions about how to craft that debate. We certainly agree

the debate will occur next week, and we are trying to reach a consent

agreement that would allow us to have several different options that

would reflect the sentiment of most Members of the Senate about the

current situation in Iraq and the decision to go forward and try to

quiet the capital city of Baghdad. So those discussions will continue

throughout the day.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.