Mr. President, at this time there is no more important

issue facing our country than the mission and the fate of the American

service men and women in Iraq. This means, of course, that the men and

women of this body have no higher duty than to express ourselves openly

and honestly on this issue--to take a stand on where we stand.

The only truly meaningful tool the Framers gave us to do this was our

ability to fund or to not fund a war. That is it. And this is what

Republicans are insisting upon: that the Members of this body express

themselves on the question of whether to fund or not fund the war in

Iraq.

By blocking a vote on the Gregg funding resolution, our good friends

on the other side are blocking a vote on this most essential question--

the only question that ultimately matters. Do we oppose this war to the

point of action or do we simply want to make a point?

Our colleagues say they want progress in Iraq, but by blocking a vote

on the McCain benchmarks resolution, they are blocking a vote that

would actually set concrete goals.

So let's be very clear about what happened last night. Our colleagues

on the other side do not want to vote on whether troops should be

funded--period. There is no more critical question at this moment. We

have the duty to take it up, and we will continue to fight for that

right.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.