Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Iraqi

supplemental. I want to discuss this briefly with my colleagues. I will

vote against the conference report with a deadline in it. A conference

report with a deadline in it, if it passes, and sending it to the

President to sign--he is not going to sign it, but if he does sign it,

if he would sign it--would be the day al-Qaida would declare victory.

The day the deadline is set would be the day they would declare

victory. I think it is the wrong way for us to go, and that is why I

will be voting against the supplemental.

I am very pleased to support the President in his efforts not to set

a deadline. I want to take the brief time I have to talk about a way

forward because I think there is a bipartisan way forward. Once we get

through this, and once this is forced upon the President, once he

vetoes it, and once the veto is upheld--and I think these are motions

we should not be going through because they take away precious time

from focusing on a way forward, on a political solution that involves

both sides of the aisle--we should focus on federalism in Iraq. It is

something Senator Biden has spoken often about on the Democratic side,

and I have spoke about on this side: federalism that will require a

longtime presence by the United States in Iraq.

I have spoken several times on this floor about how Iraq is more than

three groups in one country: a Kurdish group, a Sunni group, and a Shia

group. It has been held together for much of its history--not

altogether but in much of its history--by exterior forces that have not

wanted it to fly apart, who still don't want it to fly apart. I think

we should recognize these realities as we did in the former Yugoslavia,

as we are today in Sudan where the south is going to vote to secede,

and recognize these political forces and put in place a federated

system: one country, three states, Baghdad as a Federal city where

powers devolve to the states, and recognize that it will require a

long-term U.S. military presence to ensure that it will work. It is a

route forward, and it is a route forward that we can agree upon as a

body. It is a route forward that has allowed for the Iraqi

Constitution, with a distribution of oil revenues equally distributed

throughout the country, to be able to help hold things together. It is

a route forward that can get us to a political equilibrium, that can

get the violence down, that can give each of the groups their area,

their region, and allow us to move forward. It requires a long-term

U.S. military presence such as what happened in Bosnia and the Dayton

Accords, where 15 years later we are still there and we are going to be

there for some period of time because if we are not, they are going to

go back to the violent ways they have had, and they have done

previously.

This is a realistic route that both sides of the aisle, that both

parties, and the executive and legislative branches, could embrace.

I met last week with the Vice President about it. I talked with the

National Security Adviser about it. Many of my colleagues on the other

side of the aisle are saying: What is the plan? What is the exit plan?

How do we get out? Here is a route to be able to deal with this. But

they have to admit, as well, on their side that a timeline, a deadline

will not work. We cannot do that. We cannot hoist it upon the

President, and it will not work in that region. As soon as you set that

deadline, as I said, al-Qaida will declare victory and people in the

region will start looking for security in other places. They will be

going to militias and different groups, and it will further fragment

the country.

If we would just set our partisanship aside for a little while and

think about this, we would recognize that this is the situation we are

in and this is the only viable solution forward. We don't want to bring

back a dictator or allow one back into Iraq. We don't want Iraq to

devolve into a full-scale civil war with a terrorist state taking place

in that country. We don't want to turn it over and just have the Shia

run the whole place and run over the Kurds and run over the Sunni in

the region. That is not realistic.

The other options are not viable and will not work. This is a route

forward. I urge my colleagues that this prospect, this federalism that

is enshrined in the Iraqi Constitution--the Iraqi Parliament passed a

federalism law last year--the Kurdish regions in northern Iraq show

that it is possible for Iraq and deepens its commitment to a Federal

system. I urge my colleagues to embrace this after this is vetoed.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.