Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Texas.

It has been 4 years since the President sent our troops into Iraq, 4

long years. That is longer than it took to win World War II. More than

3,300 troops have sacrificed their lives in Iraq, and nearly 25,000

have been wounded--many severely.

With passage of this conference agreement, Congress will have

appropriated more than $450 billion for the war in Iraq. Did my

colleagues hear that? Four hundred and fifty billion dollars. That

compares with the $296 billion which the United States spent on World

War II. Yet in the 4 years since our troops succeeded in removing

Saddam Hussein from power, the President has failed--and I say this

with all due respect when I speak about the President--the President

has failed in his mission to bring peace and stability to the people of

Iraq. The troops had the courage and the strength to win the war, but

the President has not had the wisdom to win the peace. It is time--past

time--for a new direction in Iraq.

The agreement before us today provides that new direction. But rather

than admit the need to change course, the President--and I say this

with all due respect--continues to try to mislead the American public

about the war in Iraq.

He recently asked Congress to ``put partisanship on hold.'' But then

he, the President, voiced the incredible assertion that the attacks on

9/11 are linked to the war in Iraq. That is not true, and the American

people know it.

The President complained that Congress is holding funding for the

troops hostage to funding for domestic needs. President Bush claims

that Democrats are adding pork barrel spending to a bill intended for

the troops. The President has charged that Democrats are ``legislating

defeat'' in Iraq.

President Bush has tried to scare the pants off the public by

suggesting that our bill could result in death and destruction in

America. What utter nonsense. What hogwash. This Senate must not be a

rubberstamp for this or any President. Under the Constitution, Congress

has a duty to question the war policies of this or any President. We

must listen to the voices of the people, and the American people have

sent a very clear message to Washington: It is time to start to bring

our troops home from Iraq.

The Congress has responded, crafting a new direction that will spur

the Iraqi Government to pursue real political reconciliation in that

country. The American people do not support an open-ended U.S. military

occupation in Iraq. It is time for the truth; it is time for the White

House to stop the fear mongering and face the truth.

In the book of John, chapter 8, verse 32 of the King James version of

the Holy Bible are these words:

The Congress is not holding funding for the troops hostage to

domestic pork barrel spending. The $6.9 billion for rebuilding the gulf

coast after Hurricane Katrina is not pork barrel spending. Ask the

citizens of New Orleans. The $1.8 billion for the VA to provide first-

class health care to our wounded veterans is not pork barrel spending.

Ask the troops who are waiting for care, and ask their families. I know

$20 million to repair Walter Reed Hospital is not pork barrel spending.

The $650 million for the SCHIP child health program to deal with the

shortfall in 14 States is not pork barrel

spending. Ask the parents with sick children. The $2.25 billion for

securing the country from terrorist attack, including port and border

security, transit security, funds to improve screening for explosives

at airports, and/or screening cargo on passenger aircraft is not

pork barrel spending. It is homeland security to prevent the death and

destruction which President Bush warns about.

This country must not forsake critical domestic needs because of this

President's single-minded obsession with his failed mission. Congress

has appropriated more than $38 billion for rebuilding Iraq, and this

agreement adds another $3 billion. I simply do not understand why this

President--our President--is eager to commit billions of dollars to

rebuild Baghdad but absolutely opposes additional money to rebuild the

gulf coast here in America. Why does President Bush decry needed funds

for the Veterans' Administration to build a first-class health care

system for our brave troops?

Pork barrel spending? I think not. The conference agreement that is

before the Senate today totals $124 billion. It is lower than the House

bill. Yet essential funding for gulf coast recovery, veterans medical

care, homeland security, and agricultural disaster relief remains.

The conference report also includes an increase in the minimum wage--

the first increase since 1997. It is needed, it is fair, and it is long

overdue.

There is also $4.9 billion in tax incentives for small businesses

that are fully paid for in the bill. Small business is the backbone of

our economy and these incentives will help economic growth.

This bill includes more than $100 billion for the Department of

Defense--nearly $4 billion above the President's inadequate request. It

protects the troops by including $1.2 billion above the President's low

number for mine-resistant vehicles.

This bill cares for the troops by providing $2.1 billion more than

the President for health care, including more resources for troops with

traumatic brain injury. Pork barrel? I think not.

The President--our President--claims this is a partisan bill. The

President claims Congress is trying to micromanage the war,

substituting our judgment for the judgment of our generals. The

President knows better.

The Constitution says that ``the Congress shall have power''--do you

know what that means? The Congress, that is us--``the Congress shall

have power to . . . provide for the common Defense.'' It is the

Congress--yes, it is the Congress--that is given the sole power to

declare war. The Congress is sworn to ``raise and support Armies.'' The

Congress has heard the voices of the people, and we have responded as

we are elected to do.

This conference agreement provides a new directive for the war in

Iraq. It is patriotic, not partisan, to help the President to see the

truth--the truth. It is our duty. It is a duty born of love for this

great country, the Constitution, and the American people.

If the President decides to veto the bill, he will be holding funding

for the troops hostage to his stubborn insistence on going into Iraq

and the resulting disaster caused by his, the President's, war

policies.

I encourage all Members to vote for this conference report. We can

send a strong message to the White House. We can help this President

face the truth. Four years after our troops removed Saddam Hussein from

power, the President's policies simply are not working. They must

change. We must come together as a country to repair the damage caused

by this horrendous war--this horrendous war--and chart a new direction

in Iraq.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.