Mr. President, a lot has been said about this bill.

Let's get the facts straight before we cast a vote. This administration

has said: If you vote for this bill, you don't support the troops.

Nothing could be further from the truth. This bill is the ultimate

definition of supporting the troops. The truth is, a ``yes'' vote

ensures our troops are equipped and prepared to defend themselves,

moves them out of another country's civil war, and provides health care

that has been lacking for those who return home injured. This is not

about surrender, this is about our best chance for success.

A vote against this $124 billion spending bill is a vote against the

$100 billion for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. A vote against

this bill is a vote against a billion-dollar increase to get

desperately needed equipment to our National Guard and Reserve who

fight abroad and protect us at home. A vote against this bill is a vote

against $3 billion for the purchase of 8,500 mine-resistant, ambush-

protected vehicles to protect our soldiers from deadly roadside bombs.

A vote against this bill is a vote against nearly $3 billion to help

reform an overburdened veterans health system struggling to take care

of our returning wounded. A vote against this bill is a vote against

$900 million to research and treat posttraumatic stress disorder and

traumatic brain injuries, two of the most critical issues facing

wounded soldiers. A vote against this bill is a vote against more than

$650 million in emergency funding for children's health care coverage.

Without this funding, we are closing our doctors' doors to our Nation's

children. A vote against this bill is a vote against $6.9 billion for

the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita who are still struggling to

rebuild their homes and their lives more than a year after the storms

hit.

A vote against this bill is a vote against allowing States to have

stronger standards to protect chemical security plants. A vote against

this bill is a vote against over $2 billion in homeland security

initiatives, including mass transit, port security, and other measures

that passed in the 9/11 bill in the Senate.

Quite frankly, I don't have faith in President Bush's escalation, a

plan with benchmarks but no real consequences. I have said again and

again, benchmarks without consequences are just aspirations. We have

seen countless misguided plans from this administration, but the Iraqis

have never been held accountable.

We were told that by the end of 2006 a provincial election law would

be approved. That benchmark has not been met. We were told the Iraqis

would approve a law for debaathification, but that benchmark has not

been met. We were told the Iraqis would create a law to help restrain

sectarian militias. That benchmark has not been met. We were told that

Iraqis would establish a law to regulate the oil industry and share

revenues, but that benchmark has not been met. We were told that by

March the Iraqi Government was supposed to hold a referendum on

constitutional amendments, but that benchmark has not been met.

Time and time again, the Iraqi Government has fallen short, and time

And again this administration has looked the other way, basing their plans

on the hope that the Iraqi Government will step up.

Continuing this failed policy in Iraq based on the mere hope that

things will improve is not good enough. The broken promises must stop.

Some on the other side of the aisle point out that the President is

the Commander in Chief. I remind my friends that the Constitution puts

the Congress in charge of appropriating funds. Congress has the power,

the right, and the obligation to make sure we spend the taxpayers'

money wisely. What we are saying today with this bill is no more blank

check for the Iraq war.

This bill sends a strong message to the Iraqis that it is their

responsibility to take control of their own country and that our

involvement in Iraq is not indefinite. As Thomas Friedman has written:

It is time to decide ``we will no longer play host to a war where we

are everyone's protector and target.''

We must put in motion a plan to bring a responsible end to this war.

I urge all colleagues to vote for the supplemental, a vote that takes

care of our troops, a vote to responsibly bring our troops home, and a

vote for a new direction in Iraq and here at home.