Mr. President, I believe that all Members of this body

support the Defense appropriations section. The only area of concern

and contention is that which refers to Iraq.

I think all of us agree that our forces today are bogged down in

Iraq. They are caught in the middle of a civil war, and we need a

change in plans. This war has dragged on too long and, incidentally,

longer than our involvement in World War II. Staying the course is not

working, and I, for one, am not convinced that it ever will.

The only way we can succeed in Iraq is if the Iraqis fundamentally

change the dynamic. The language in the conference agreement embraces

this idea of offering a new plan. This new plan eventually should allow

for forces to be withdrawn from Iraq.

The proposal establishes a goal--and I repeat the word ``goal''--of

redeploying most of our forces from Iraq by next March. It does not

mandate that all the troops are removed. To the contrary, it allows

that forces remain in Iraq to protect U.S. and coalition personnel. It

also stipulates that U.S. forces can continue to train and equip the

Iraqis so they can better defend themselves, and it directs that we may

continue targeted counterterrorism operations in Iraq.

This is a balanced plan. It recognizes that we still have

responsibilities in Iraq and will continue to do so even a year from

now, but it will force the Iraqis to fight their own civil war if they

insist on doing so.

We all know there are very few military objectives to be achieved in

Iraq. We defeated the Iraqi Army 4 years ago. We should keep that in

mind. I still recall the huge banner on the carrier that said:

``Mission Accomplished.'' Yes, the military mission was accomplished.

We won that part of the war, the part the military can win. We failed

in not preparing for the aftermath of direct conflict, and now we are

enmeshed in an untenable position.

Our military has performed remarkably. They have achieved their

military objectives. But the plan to rely on the military to achieve

political objectives has not worked, and what we desperately need is a

political solution. And in the end, how many truly believe we will

emerge victorious with a Jeffersonian democracy on the banks of the

Tigris River? What is victory? I have asked this question many times.

What will constitute victory? And no one has answered that question. Or

we can embrace a new plan that begins to reshape our forces in Iraq to

provide those missions that our military is best suited for with a

goal, not a mandate, but a goal of redeploying the remaining forces.

If Iraq is to succeed, it must assume responsibility for its own

destiny. It must decide if it wants to stop the civil war. We cannot do

that for them. This is a very modest proposal, but one that is caught

up in the emotion of the debate. This conference report offers a plan,

one that has much greater chance of success than staying the course.

It does not mandate a timetable for ending our

involvement in Iraq but provides a new way ahead which will ensure

better protection for our forces and a greater chance for the Iraqis to

succeed.

This is a good, balanced package. It includes the best from each of

our bills. It funds the critical needs of our military and provides a

way ahead for our forces in Iraq.

I urge all my colleagues to support this conference agreement.

I thank the Chair.