Mr. President, 3 months ago, President Bush set a new

course in Iraq. He proposed a plan to secure Baghdad and its resident

population, and he asked GEN David Petraeus, one of our best military

minds of this generation, to carry out the mission. A Democratic-

controlled Congress approved the general without dissent and wished him

well.

Then something strange happened. Soon after sending General Petraeus

into the field of battle, the Democratic leadership began its own

change in course. It decided this new mission was over before it even

had time to work.

We were told in January by some of our Democratic colleagues to

listen to the generals. Yet this week, with our top general in Iraq

here to report on progress, most of those on the other side of the

aisle covered their ears. The Speaker of the House skipped General

Petraeus's briefing altogether, didn't even go listen to him.

This posture may be calculated to impress opponents of the war at

home, but it frustrates our troops abroad, and today the Democratic

leadership does further damage by passing a war spending bill that has

no chance--no chance--of being signed into law, a bill that calls for

withdrawing U.S. troops without regard to conditions on the ground, a

bill that says we leave in October if the Iraqis have made progress and

that we leave in July if they haven't.

Let me say that again. This bill says that we leave in October if the

Iraqis have made progress and leave in July if they haven't. Either

way, we are gone.

It should not be this way. We should uphold our end of the bargain

and pass a bill that funds our troops and gives us a reasonable period

of time to judge this new strategy.

The Iraq Study Group has outlined the stakes. They said premature

withdrawal would ``almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence

and further deterioration of conditions. The near-term results would be

a significant power vacuum, greater human suffering, regional

destabilization, and

a threat to the global economy. Al-Qaeda would depict our withdrawal as

a historic victory. If we leave and Iraq descends into chaos, the long-

term consequences could eventually require the United States to

return.''

That is the Iraq Study Group which has been so frequently cited by

our good friends on the other side of the aisle.

Bin Laden knows the stakes, too. In a letter last year, bin Laden had

this to say: America's defeat in Iraq would mean defeat in all its

wars.

Yesterday, the commander of a senior Afghan Islamist group said bin

Laden is personally involved in attacks on Americans in Iraq. General

Petraeus went even further. He said al-Qaida has declared war on all of

Iraq.

I call on my friends on the other side to have an open mind and

listen to the general. We must give this plan for winning the military

component of our strategy in Iraq a real chance to succeed. Without it,

there is no political solution. Just 4 months old and operating at half

its ultimate strength, the Baghdad security plan is already having an

effect. Military leaders say the increased violence around Baghdad is a

sign that the terrorists are shaken. The latest attacks were meant to

be dramatic and to be visible. They were meant to force our withdrawal

and ultimately our humiliation.

George Orwell said:

This is a road we must not take. This legislation is tragic. If the

Iraqis make progress, we leave; if they don't, we leave. This is not a

choice, it is a mandate for a defeat that al-Qaida desperately wants.

It is not too late to change course. I ask my colleagues to be as

patient as our soldiers and marines--and, indeed, the terrorists--and

draft a bill that does not arbitrarily circle a date on the calendar

and trigger withdrawal without regard to conditions on the ground. Then

we can tell our troops that help is on the way, that they can finish

this mission, and that they will return with honor. If not, if we give

up, we will truly have reason to fear because if we cannot win this

most important battle, how will we ever win the war?

I yield the floor.