Mr. President, I rise to speak in favor of the

amendment that will be offered by Senator Obama. Our amendment takes

part of the legislation we have introduced, the Dignity for the Wounded

Warriors Act, and moves it to the front of the line.

The question which has to be asked is, Why? Why is it important that

this go into this bill at this time? There is a lot of talk about what

should and shouldn't go into the supplemental. I think it is important

we realize if we don't act immediately to begin to take the kind of

care of our wounded they need to have, that they should have, that we

are morally bound to give them, then we shouldn't be passing any more

supplemental funding for any more activities in this war.

It is of primary importance to us that we take care of the men and

women who have been wounded, who have given more than most Americans

will ever give as it relates to this conflict in the Middle East.

I have to say, if you step back and look at this problem, it is not

just the active military hospitals that this amendment deals with, but

it is the entire system of medical care for our wounded and for our

veterans.

I was struck last week when a report came out on all the veterans

facilities around the country. This was an internal report done by the

Veterans' Administration but contained in that report was a startling

revelation. In that report they found there was a bat infestation in a

veterans hospital in the State of the Senator from Oregon.

Now, one would think that if you found a bat infestation in a

hospital alarms would go off, lights would signal, and the head of that

hospital would step up and say: I failed. Oh, no. The head of that

hospital said the bats had been helpful to the insect population.

Understand that with this particular species of bat, there is more

bacteria contained in an ounce of the droppings from this animal than

any other species of bat. Microbiologists

yearn to study these droppings because of all of the bacteria that is

contained in them.

Something is terribly wrong when we have a veterans hospital in this

country that is putting up with an infestation of bats, and if we don't

have it in us to fix this medical facility and all others like it in

this country, then shame on us. Shame on our Nation that we can't do

what we must do to take care of those who have taken care of us.

All the rhetoric about ``support the troops''--forget about it if we

can't do basic medical care for those who are coming home who are

wounded. We specifically deal with that in our amendment, with the

additional funds in this supplemental that we have added to the

President's budget to care for our veterans and veterans facilities.

There is no job we have here that is more important. I hope my

colleagues will support this amendment and the addition of about $1.7

billion in funding to the supplemental for veterans care. They are both

important. They are both moral imperatives. It is time we make that

phrase--``support our troops''--more than a political phrase.

Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Oregon, or to go back to

regular order.