Madam President, I would like to associate myself with

the comments of Senator McCain about what is going on the ground in

Iraq. I thought he did an excellent job of explaining that this new

strategy is just what it is described as being--new. We are not sending

more people to do the same old thing. It is a fundamentally different

approach to how we handle the situation in Iraq.

The situation in Iraq is the result of not having enough forces on

the ground in the early parts of the war. The security environment in

Iraq got out of control. The terrorists seized an opportunity to divide

the Iraqis by bombing the Samarra mosque, the third most holy site in

the Shia region in Samarra. Ever since then, we have been in a conflict

between Shias and Sunnis in Baghdad.

Anbar has always been about Sunni insurgents trying to topple this

Infant democracy, and it has been the place where al-Qaida has been hiding.

The progress is that the Sunni insurgency--the tribal chiefs are

beginning to understand that their lives are better with the unified

Iraq; that if they can share in the oil revenues of the country, future

Sunni generations will be benefited. I think Shias are beginning to

understand that to reject Al-Sadr--his view of Iraq becoming a Shia

theocracy is not going to be accepted by people in the neighborhood and

other folks living in Iraq. So I think every group is beginning to

understand that through political reconciliation, they have a better,

brighter future. The way to get political reconciliation is to control

the violence. That is why we need more troops, more troops to hold

areas previously cleared, to buy time for political reconciliation and

economic progress, and the early indications are that it is working.

Now, what is not working. The Congress is not working. I think the

Congress is about to make history in all of the wrong ways. Do we

really want to be the first Congress--maybe ever in the history of the

country, that I am aware of--that would, by congressional enactment,

set a hard date to withdraw from a war in Iraq with which our vital

national security interests as Americans are intertwined? What are the

consequences of leaving in March or any other date in 2008? What

happens when we leave? No one who is offering these amendments has

really thought that through.

I do believe that a failed State in Iraq jeopardizes our national

security interests for decades, is a loss in the war on terror, is an

empowering event for extremists, a death blow to moderation, and that

we need to see this through by changing course, and this is exactly

what we are doing.

Setting a timeline for withdrawal is saying you have no confidence in

General Petraeus to execute the plan we sent him to execute. It is

saying we have no confidence in our military to deliver, because the

day you set that date, you are going to freeze political

reconciliation. People are not going to do deals the same way when they

know America is going to leave at a certain date because what happens

when America leaves will be thought of in terms of the consequences of

a particular deal.

If we leave and Iraq is in chaos, the police and the army are unable

to deal with the wolves of terrorism, then they are overwhelmed, the

country breaks apart, and the regional consequences and the

consequences to the world are monumental, in my opinion.

The first rule of medicine is to do no harm. It should be the first

rule of politics. And we have done harm with our Iraqi strategy. We

have assumed the best and never planned for the worst.

Whatever mistakes the Bush team has made, and there are many, the

Congress is about to make the greatest mistake of all; that is, to tell

the enemy what they have to do to get us out of Iraq on their terms,

not ours. It is a death blow to moderation. Who in the Mideast will try

to come together knowing that the United States cannot be counted on?

What effect would it have on the worldwide terrorist networks if they

believe, through their acts of violence and barbaric behavior, that

America will leave?

We cannot let suicide bombers determine the fate of the 21st century.

We cannot let people who will blow up children in a car determine the

fate of Iraq. We cannot let that happen. We are bigger than that. We

are better than that. I believe passionately, after five visits, with

one more to come, that the people in Iraq want more. They are dying for

their own freedom. I would leave tomorrow if I thought the Iraqi people

were incapable of solving their problems. I do believe the majority of

Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds want the same thing that every Member of this

body wants for their family--a better life. They have looked into the

abyss, and they are making the changes they need to make.

If we restrict funding, if we restrict our military commanders'

ability to go after the enemy in all of its forms, we are doing them a

disservice. If you set a hard deadline for withdrawal, you have doomed

us as a nation to lose in Iraq. What good would it be for one person to

be maimed or to die waiting on that day to come? If you pick March

2008, what do you tell a family member of the U.S. military why their

loved one died or was harmed, knowing that the date killed our efforts

to be successful? This is irresponsible. This does everything wrong

that the Congress could do at a time when things could get better.

I cannot promise you success. But I know our last best chance lies

with General Petraeus. Our last best chance lies with a reinforcement

of a country and a military that needs it. The military needs this

money. They deserve this money without strings attached. They deserve a

chance to turn Iraq around to make us free.

The House may be satisfied with this vote on the supplemental, and

they may think this is a victory for the Democratic leadership in the

House. I think this is a shameful chapter in the history of the House.

These votes to pass this bill were literally bought. There is money in

this bill, the supplemental bill, that has nothing to do with the

military, nothing to do with Iraq, and there was money being spent to

buy votes to make sure we drive ourselves out of Iraq without

consequence and the thought of what happens.

If we do not pass a supplemental soon, Secretary Gates has laid out

what happens in April, May, and June to our military. Because of time

limitations, I will not go into detail on what happens to the military,

but I can tell you with certainty that the military needs this money

for ongoing operations, and every month and week that goes by without

this money going into the Department of Defense, major decisions have

to be made that compromise troop safety, that hurt the quality of life

of families, and keep this surge from being successful.

If your goal is to end this war because you think we have lost,

choose an honorable path. The honorable path would be to come to this

floor, offer an amendment to stop funding now and get out of Iraq as

soon as possible. A date certain a year from now, a year and a half

from now, whatever date you pick, it ensures we lose, and it ensures

that the people who are left there to fight until that day comes get

injured and die in vain.

This is the wrong way to run a war. This is the wrong way to fight

terrorism.

Three weeks ago, I was at Guantanamo Bay listening to Shaikh

Mohammed, the mastermind of 9/11, explaining why he was at war with us.

He will be at war with us until his last breath. There are people like

him in Iraq measuring us as a nation. Please do not send them the wrong

signal. Fund our troops without condition. Stand behind General

Petraeus because he deserves our support.

We sent him off to do a mission. Give him the resources to do it, and

in time we will figure this out. This is not an open-ended commitment.

I know as well as everybody else that we are not going to be in Iraq

forever. But we need to be in Iraq on terms that will empower moderates

and deflate extremists. I believe the Iraqi political leadership, given

the breathing space, will have the ability, with our support, to

reconcile their country because it is in their best interests.

Literally thousands of Iraqis have died for their own freedom. What

more can we ask of someone. Political reconciliation is hard. It took

us 13 years to write our Constitution. We were at civil war among

ourselves. Democracy is hard, but it is worth fighting for.