Mr. President, I thank the able Senator from Washington.

While I oppose the amendment by the Senator from Mississippi, I thank

him for his courtesy in bringing this bill to

the floor. In order to facilitate Senate action on this critical

supplemental bill, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported a bill

by voice vote on Thursday, March 22. Again, I thank the able Senator

from Mississippi, Mr. Cochran, for his support.

In this 2007 supplemental, the Congress is providing nearly $100

billion to support our military and diplomatic efforts in Iraq and

Afghanistan. This brings total appropriations for the wars to nearly

$170 billion for this year alone. When Congress approves this

supplemental, it will have appropriated $448 billion for the war in

Iraq.

As the conflict in Iraq enters its fifth year, more than 3,220

members of the uniformed services have sacrificed their lives, with

over 24,000 more wounded, many grievously wounded. The Iraq conflict

most certainly has become a civil war. The American people need to know

what we are accomplishing by remaining in Iraq. How much longer will

Congress continue to blindly write checks for this failed strategy in

Iraq? Supporting the troops means doing all we can to remove them from

this violent internal sectarian conflict in Iraq.

The American people have made it very clear where they stand on this

matter. A large majority of Americans, according to any number of

polls, wants the troops home, and the sooner the better. I, for one, am

not so stubborn that I will keep marching on toward some intangible

success in Iraq, no matter how many may die, no matter how many may be

wounded, and no matter how many families are torn apart by grief. A

continued U.S. presence is a catalyst for violence in Iraq and in the

region. It is time to remove that spark from this volatile situation

and pursue a diplomatic track which may lead to a national

reconciliation for the people of Iraq.

The language in this bill encourages a decrease in Iraqi reliance on

U.S. troops to keep the peace in Iraq and pave the way for the Iraqi

people to take steps toward national reconciliation. The language in

the bill is not Draconian, nor is it precipitous. It is simply a

recognition of the reality of the situation in Iraq. It calls for a

gradual redeployment of U.S. troops in conjunction with concerted

efforts to train and equip Iraqi security forces while building

regional and international support for the Iraqi Government. The

language permits continued counterterrorism operations by U.S. forces

and allows a limited number of U.S. forces to remain in order to

protect U.S. and coalition personnel and infrastructure. That is not a

precipitous withdrawal. It is not cutting and running. Rather, it is a

commonsense compromise between those who want all the troops home now

and those who advocate a continued massive American presence in Iraq.

It is time--yes, time--to change course in Iraq before 3,000 more

Americans and thousands more Iraqis are killed.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment to strike section

1315(a) and (b) of the bill.

I yield the floor.