Mr. President, we have arrived at a key moment for

U.S. policy in Iraq. History recalls Operations Desert Shield and Storm

in 1990 and 1991. It recalls the no-fly zones we maintained in the

1990s. It recalls the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. It recalls our

sanctions against Saddam Hussein. And when history records Operation

Iraqi Freedom, it will remember whether Congress provided the direction

necessary to complete the mission or chose to cut it off prematurely.

History win judge today's vote.

The American people await this vote. The Iraqi people await this

vote. Al-Qaida awaits this vote. The surge is now underway. I did not

support the surge, but I hope it works. The first reports have been

encouraging, but the fog of war remains thick. Over the next few

months, we will be able to assess whether the surge is working or not.

Now is hardly the time to set a date for retreat.

I am not saying we should have an open-ended commitment, but I am

saying that our mission over there--and not politics over here--should

drive our policy. I know many of my colleagues believe we have nothing

to gain by staying. But I believe there is a way forward.

Everyone agrees that a political solution is crucial to success. And

it turns out that the political solution Iraqis ought to pursue is the

most American of all: Federalism.

Thankfully, in the early days in America, we did not have the kind of

factional violence and terrorism we have seen in Iraq. But it certainly

included rivalries between the colonies and different visions of the

future.

The great solution chosen by the founding fathers was federalism--

something embodied by the Senate itself. An Iraq with several federal

regions, with Baghdad as a federal capital represents the best chance

for Iraq to achieve stability.

If the surge works, federalism can provide the framework necessary to

stabilize Iraq over the long term. If the surge fails, and Iraq's

sectarian violence deepens, a federal Iraq will be the only choice

available to separate the warring factions while keeping Iraq from

breaking apart--something that we cannot allow to occur in such a vital

region.

I believe that instead of giving the terrorists a reason to be

hopeful and sending mixed signals to our forces in the field, we should

be talking about the possibility of a federal Iraq. The Iraqi

Constitution calls for it. The Iraqi Parliament passed a law supporting

it. The Kurdish region proves that it can be successful. Yes, a federal

Iraq may require the presence of U.S. forces for some period of time.

But as we have seen in Bosnia, our deployments in support of a

political solution endorsed by all sides can bring lasting peace and a

chance for a brighter future.

For this reason, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the Cochran

amendment. We need to stop talking about how to retreat and start

talking about winning in Iraq. A conversation about a federal Iraq is

the best way for the Senate to contribute to success in Iraq.