Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Washington for her

leadership and floor management.

The Cochran amendment would strike the heart of the provision

relating to Iraq from this supplemental appropriations bill. The main

point of our provision is a requirement that the President commence a

reduction of U.S. forces from Iraq not later than 120 days after

enactment. Not included in the reduction would be those forces that are

essential for force protection, training and equipping Iraqi forces,

and conducting targeted counterterrorism operations.

This language is essential because nothing else has been successful

in convincing the Iraqis that they have to take responsibility for

their own country and that they must make the political compromises

that are necessary to end the sectarian violence and defeat the

insurgency in Iraq. Only when the Iraqis realize the mission of U.S.

forces is going to change and that we are going to reduce the number of

U.S. forces in Iraq will they realize we cannot save them from

themselves, and that they need to act to meet the commitments they made

to themselves and to us.

Commitments are only words unless they are fulfilled. Last month,

during our debate on Iraq, I put in the Record Secretary Rice's letter

to me of January 2007 which had an enclosure of the listing of the

political commitments and the timelines the Iraqis themselves had

established. Virtually none of those commitments has been met, despite

the fact most of them were to have been fulfilled last year, and all

but one were to have been accomplished prior to this month. They

committed themselves to approve a provincial elections law and they set

a date for a provincial elections law by October of 2006. They set a

date to approve militias and other armed formations by December 2006.

They set a date for the constitutional review committee to complete its

work by January 2007. They made a commitment to conduct a referendum on

constitutional amendments which was to have been accomplished by this

month. They violated every single one of those commitments.

We need to retain this language. We need to retain the language that

we begin to reduce the number of American forces in Iraq beginning in 4

months because that reduction is the action-forcing mechanism--the sign

to the Iraqi leaders we cannot save them from themselves, and their

future is in their hands, not our hands.

The most graphic demonstration of the importance of our provision is

the fact that even our senior leaders in this administration, while

opposing our position, have used the growing support for our position

to try to impress upon the Iraqi leaders they have to move promptly to

settle their differences and to meet their commitments.

Last month while in Baghdad, Secretary Rice used the restiveness in

Washington to emphasize to the Iraqi leaders the growth of American

frustration with the absence of a political settlement in Iraq. She

said she had ``made clear that some of the debate in Washington is

indicative of the concerns that the American people have about the

prospects for success'' if Iraq's leaders do not quickly take the steps

needed to ensure longer-term stability.

Ambassador Khalilzad, in a television interview on March 9, said the

debate in Congress:

He said, Ambassador Khalilzad said--

The Iraqi Study Group said:

The Iraq Study Group said--

I think perhaps General Casey said it best:

General Casey had it right. Let us not sustain the Cochran amendment.

Let's keep this critically important action-forcing mechanism in the

bill where it will do some good to force those Iraqi leaders to finally

recognize their future is in their hands, not ours.