Mr. President, the amendment which we are going to vote

on very shortly in the Senate is a historic amendment. It is an

amendment which I think will be followed very carefully not just in the

United States but around the world, particularly in Iraq.

Understand what this amendment does. The Cochran amendment removes

the language which starts to bring American troops home. The Cochran

language, instead, calls on the President to make periodic reports to

Congress on the progress in Iraq. With all due respect to those who

support that amendment, periodic reports will not bring this war to an

end. Periodic messages from the White House will not turn over this war

to the Iraqis to defend their own country.

What we have seen in Iraq is the worst foreign policy mistake in our

time. We have paid so dearly in our Nation for this mistake. Over 3,200

of our bravest soldiers have given their lives. Over 24,000 have come

home injured, some with serious injuries that will haunt them for a

lifetime. We have spent $500 billion of our treasure in Iraq that could

have been spent in the United States for the betterment of our people.

We have given to the Iraqi people more than any other Nation could ask

for. We have stood behind them, we have deposed their dictator, we have

given them free governance and a chance at a constitution and free

elections. Now it is time for us to make it clear to the Iraqis that it

is their country, it is their war, and it is their future.

This President recently said we need to continue to send soldiers,

more soldiers, into Iraq. Sadly, many of them are being sent to battle

without the equipment, the training, the rest they

need, and the time at home with their families. We are pushing these

brave men and women to the limit. Voting for the Cochran amendment says

it is enough that the President sends us every 60 or 90 days a report;

that he tells us how things are going; how we are doing. Is that why we

are in Congress, to receive reports from the President, to put them on

a bookshelf somewhere and hope a staffer has time to read them? I think

not.

What we are here to do is speak for the American people who want a

new direction in Iraq. They want this Congress to stand up once and for

all and say to this President that this policy has to change. American

soldiers must start to come home in an orderly manner and the Iraqis

have to stand and defend their own country. A vote for the Cochran

amendment, sadly, will take away any type of incentive for the Iraqis

to do the right thing for their own Nation.

Many have studied this over the last 4 years, a war that has gone on

longer than World War II. They have come to the same conclusions--the

Iraq Study Group and many others--it is time for the United States to

announce a new policy. The Cochran amendment says we will stay with the

old policy; we will receive periodic reports from the White House. That

is not the answer.

What we need to do is to stand behind our soldiers by bringing them

home as quickly as possible.