Mr. President, less than 2 weeks ago, a bipartisan

majority of Senators put aside disagreements over the war in Iraq and

agreed on at least one thing and that one thing was that announcing a

surrender date for our troops is certainly not in our national

interest.

It is wrong by the troops who have been risking their lives to bring

stability and order throughout Baghdad and Iraq. Certainly, they do not

want to tell the enemy they intend to run up the white flag 365 days

from today. Setting a date for withdrawal is akin to sending a memo to

our enemies to rest, refit, and replan until the day we leave. It is a

memo to our friends, too, telling them we plan to walk away and leave

them on their own, regardless of what we leave behind. We know as well

as they do that we can expect the following: a Sunni minority exposed

to the whims of the Shia majority, ethnic cleansing, and regional

instability the consequences of which are painful to contemplate but

easy to predict.

It is wrong by the commanders in the field, who have been sent into

battle with a mission to fulfill and who know better than we do how to

carry out that mission.

It is wrong by the Iraqis themselves, who have risked their lives and

fortunes on the strength of a promise that the United States of America

would stand with them and see this struggle through until the end.

We voted against setting a surrender date, despite intense political

pressure because common sense tells us that politicians in Washington

don't tell the commanders on the battlefield when the fight is won.

Common sense told us something else a few months ago. It told us we

had to change course, and that is exactly what we have done. We

realized the only way we would win this fight would be to secure the

city of Baghdad, the seat of the Iraqi Government, and home to a

quarter of its population. We implemented a strategy to do it.

Some have said there is no military, only a political solution to

ending the violence in Iraq. But we can't pretend the Iraqis will forge

a political solution unless they are secure in their homes and on their

streets. That is the key to the Petraeus strategy and to our efforts in

Baghdad.

We have been pursuing that new course for the last few months. A

Democratic-controlled Senate sent a new commander into the field of

battle to carry it out. We have seen early signs of success, enough to

believe this new approach was exactly the right thing to do.

Now Congress is being asked to fund it. I agree this is also the

right thing to do. We are not about to pull the rug out from under our

soldiers in the field just as they begin to carry out the mission we

have sent them on. We are going to give them everything they need, and

we are not going to slip a deadline now into their security package.

The Constitution gives those who oppose this war a clear and concrete

way of expressing their views, and that is to vote against funding it.

Attempting to have it both ways--by slipping a withdrawal date into

this bill and making the support of our troops contingent on a

dangerous and defeatist surrender date--was wrong a week and a half ago

and it is wrong now.

It is also dangerous. President Bush has repeatedly said he will veto

a bill that includes a surrender date. He said it again this morning.

He said this spending bill, in its current form, assumes and enforces

the failure of the new strategy even before American commanders are

able to implement their plans and he will veto it if it reaches his

desk.

I urge my colleagues not to take us down this path, not to delay the

delivery of emergency funding to our troops by forcing a Presidential

veto. There is no need. Nothing has changed since the majority of us

voted against this very same timeline the week before last.

Stripping the withdrawal date will not prevent anyone in this Chamber

from expressing his or her views on Iraq. Its only effect would be to

delay the delivery of much needed funding and equipment to our soldiers

in the field. I strongly urge my colleagues to strike this dangerous

provision and support the Cochran amendment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.