Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment.

Mr. President, more than 4 years ago, the Bush administration took

this Nation to war in Iraq--took this Nation to war in Iraq without

sufficient troops, without a plan to win the peace, and without truth

regarding Saddam Hussein's nonexistent weapons of mass destruction or

his nonexistent links to al-Qaida.

Nearly 51 months later--6 months longer than it took this Nation to

defeat Germany and Japan in World War II--the violence in Iraq

continues and the cost to our military and our Nation has been

frightening. More than 3,400 American troops have made the ultimate

sacrifice--death. Nine were killed yesterday and two more today in this

escalating violence across Iraq in which we are losing our brave men

and women. Guard and Reserve units all across America lack equipment to

do their jobs at home and in Iraq. U.S. citizens have provided nearly

half a trillion dollars to cover the cost of this intractable civil

war. And because of this war, our Nation has been totally distracted in

its effort to defeat those who attacked us on 9/11. Indeed, more than 5

years after 9/11, Osama bin Laden is still free, and al-Qaida remains

an important force.

Throughout all this, our military has performed heroically. Our

troops have done everything asked of them and even more. Our troops

toppled a dictator and gave the Iraqis a chance to establish a new

government and a new way of life. Unfortunately, the Bush

administration did not provide them a strategy to match that sacrifice.

Iraq is now in a state of civil war, with no end in sight, and our

valiant troops are caught in the middle.

Instead of accepting this reality, President Bush has stubbornly

refused to change course. Instead of listening to his military

commanders who say there is no military solution in Iraq, he has

plunged our forces further into sectarian fighting. Instead of

accepting a bipartisan path in Iraq offered by Congress and even the

Iraq Study Group, this President stubbornly clings to his failed ``my

way or the highway'' approach to governing America.

MG John Batiste, who commanded the First Infantry Division in Iraq,

says this about the President's failed Iraq policy:

Earlier this year, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger

said: The problems in Iraq are more complex than Vietnam, and military

victory is no longer possible. Henry Kissinger said--and I repeat--the

problems in Iraq are more complex than Vietnam, and military victory is

no longer possible.

GEN George Casey, former Commander of U.S. Forces in Iraq, and

currently Chief of Staff of the Army, said:

That was General Casey. Six months ago, the Iraq Study Group said the

situation in Iraq was grave and deteriorating. The civil war in Iraq

has only gotten more pronounced since then. Unfortunately, the

President's escalation strategy has not produced the positive results

we seek. Attacks on U.S. forces have increased, not decreased. Since

the onset of this latest surge, more than three U.S. soldiers have been

killed every day. Nearly 90 soldiers have been killed this month so

far, and almost 400 since the escalation plan began. Sectarian killings

have increased to presurge levels.

According to today's Washington Post newspaper, over 300 unidentified

corpses, most dumped in streets and alleys and water sewer systems,

showing signs of torture and execution, were found all across the

capital of Iraq in the month of May. And the month of May is not over.

Four million Iraqis, including 1.6 million children, have fled their

homes because of the violence, setting the stage for a massive

humanitarian crisis.

Our military has been pushed to the breaking point. To make up for

the shortages of combat-ready forces, tours of duty have now been

extended from 12 to 15 months, with many soldiers now in their third

and fourth tours.

Mr. President, I spoke just last week to one Nevada family whose son

was killed in action last week. We all remember there were three

hostages, prisoners of war. I called the father, and he said: I pray

that my boy is one of the three. There were four that were

unidentified. Well, his prayers were not answered. His son was the one

incinerated in the humvee, and they had to wait until they took DNA to

find out it was his son.

This soldier had survived four vehicle explosions during his four

tours of duty. That is too much to ask of any soldier or his family.

Perhaps, not surprisingly after all, this soldier expressed

reservations about the war in Iraq, is what he told his best friend

before he left for the fourth time. His grandfather said:

Meanwhile, our capacity to respond to other challenges around the

world has been greatly constrained. Terror attacks across the world are

up, not down. U.S. influence and standing is down, not up. By focusing

on Iraq and doing little or nothing in the rest of the Middle East,

this critical region has been destabilized even further and stands even

closer to a broader regional war.

The American people saw all this unfolding last November and they

reached a conclusion that enough was enough. That is why they sent this

President and Congress a clear and unmistakable challenge and a direct

message: Find a responsible end to this war.

That is what congressional Democrats have done. From the very first

day of this democratically controlled Congress, we have made it clear

to the President that the days of blank checks and green lights for his

failed policy are over. After 6 years of rubberstamping President

Bush's failed policy, Congress has reasserted its rightful position in

our constitutional form of Government.

Democrats have held more hearings on Iraq in 4 months than the

Republican-controlled Congress held in 4 years. We have repeatedly

forced our Republican colleagues in the Senate and in the House to

debate and vote on where people stand with respect to the President's

failed Iraq policy. With each step we have taken, the pressure on the

President and his Republican allies to change course has grown.

The most important step we have taken occurred last month. In the

face of heavy White House pressure and more misleading statements by

administration officials, Congress was able to pass a bill that did

what the American people asked us to do: No. 1, fully fund our troops

and, No. 2, immediately change the direction of the war in Iraq.

In addition, the bill provides much needed funds to procure

additional equipment for our Guard and Reserve and to provide health

care services for active-duty troops and America's heroic veterans.

As the Senate Democratic leader, I am very proud of Senate Democrats.

In less than 4 months of Democratic control, with virtual Democratic

unanimity, Congress sent the President binding language that would

truly compel him to do what the American people desire. Unfortunately,

though, the President vetoed that important legislation, leaving him

further isolated from the American people, military experts, and an

increasing number of his own political party.

In the days since that veto, we have had negotiations with the

administration about how to proceed. The President made it very clear

as late as last night that he intended to veto any effort to implement

timelines, transition the mission, or ensure the readiness of our

troops before they are deployed. Furthermore, here in the Senate our

minority colleagues made it clear they are determined to place

procedural hurdles, most notably requiring 60 votes rather than a

simple majority, in front of those who seek to significantly alter the

President's Iraq policy. Democratic unanimity with a handful of

Republicans will not be sufficient to do what we believe must be done.

Until more Republicans develop the courage to step forward and insist

that the President change course in Iraq, Republican intransigence has

left us with no good options.

How to vote on this bill before us is a very difficult and personal

decision for each Member of this Senate. There are many thoughtful

members of my caucus who believe we should vote no, and continue to

vote no until the President and his supporters come to their senses.

There are equally thoughtful members who believe we must vote yes

because this bill does take a step forward in holding the President and

the Iraqis accountable and it does increase pressure on this

administration and its supporters to change direction in Iraq.

Although this is a very close call for me, as I suspect it is for

many Senators, I have decided to support this measure. But let me say,

I know those who oppose this bill care as deeply about the safety of

our troops as I do. They know I care as deeply about changing the

course in Iraq as they do.

This bill before us clearly does not go as far as a bipartisan

majority of Congress would like. But it goes a lot further than the

President and his supporters were willing to go earlier this month.

That is why we saw this headline in a recent edition of the Los Angeles

Times. Here is what it said: ``Senate Tilting On Iraq Policies;

Republicans Show Their Strongest Willingness Yet To Rein In Bush.''

Here is what the bill requires of the administration and Iraqis, the

one before us tonight: It establishes 18 benchmarks on which to measure

the Iraqi Government's performance; restricts the use of foreign aid to

the Iraqi Government should they fail to make meaningful progress;

requires the President to certify that the Iraqi Government deserves

these funds even if they fail to perform as promised; requires the

administration to testify before Congress and an independent assessment

by the Government Accountability Office on the performance of the Iraqi

Government; requires the President submit a report on the combat

proficiency of Iraqi security forces; requires the President to

redeploy our troops if the Iraqi Government concludes our presence is

no longer desired; restricts use of Defense Department funding until

Congress receives information about contractors in Iraq; and states

official U.S. policy precludes permanent military bases in Iraq, no

torture of detainees, and no designs on Iraqi oil.

When the President signs the bill, that will be the law. Some of this

language is taken from an amendment offered by Senator John Warner last

week. Senator Warner offered his amendment as an alternative to the

Feingold-Reid amendment that would have immediately transitioned the

mission in Iraq and required a phased redeployment by April 2008.

Naturally I said the Feingold-Reid language was far superior to the

Warner language. However, today we don't have the option of choosing

between Feingold-Reid and Warner. I wish we did. Although the Warner

language is weak by comparison to Feingold-Reid, and I so stated on the

Senate floor last week, I believe we can begin holding the

administration accountable if we adopt the Warner language plus the

other Iraq-related provisions contained in this bill, which I have

outlined.

I know none of these measures comes close to the timelines and

accountability provisions I supported in the vetoed bill. However, I

also know these provisions will force the administration to do more

than they have ever done before. I also know the stakes are too high

and our obligation to the troops and the country is too great for us to

stop working to force the President and his supporters to change

course. The burden for securing and governing Iraq must now rest with

the Iraqi people.

As General Abizaid said:

GEN Doug Lute, recently nominated by President Bush to be his war

czar, said:

As long as I am Democratic leader and this President persists in

pursuing the worst foreign policy blunder in this Nation's history, the

American people should know I am determined to fight for change in

Iraq. The Senate Armed Services Committee reported the fiscal year 2008

Defense authorization bill earlier today. We will move to it in our

next work period, which starts in about 10 days. This battle for

responsible and effective Iraq policy will be joined in the Senate no

later than when we take up that bill. Senate Democrats will not stop

our efforts to change our course in this war until either enough

Republicans join us to reject President Bush's failed policy or we get

a new President.

In 1941, in an address at Harrow School, Winston Churchill said:

My colleagues here in the Senate, particularly my Republican

colleagues, should know this is precisely my attitude when it comes to

bringing about a change in course in the intractable civil war in Iraq.

Although I didn't get everything I sought in the bill before us, and

that is an understatement, I will not give up until the supporters of

the President's failed policy accept the realities on the ground in

Iraq, until they accept that the President's plan is not working, that

this war must come to an end, and that it is time for our troops to

come home in a safe and responsible way.

Paraphrasing the words of Winston Churchill, when it comes to forcing

the President to change course in Iraq, Senate Democrats will never

give in, never give in, never, never, never.

I ask for the yeas and nays.