Madam President, I rise today with a note of

encouragement; that is, one of the things I have noticed through the

committee process, and certainly on the Senate floor, is how

bipartisan--or maybe in a better sense of the word, nonpartisan--this

debate has been. I think the Senate is very committed to following up

on the 9/11 recommendations in the 9/11 report. I think we are

approaching this in a way that is very constructive and very positive,

and which we all hope and pray in the long term is very effective for

our national security and for our intelligence.

I know there are a number of amendments that we have still pending. I

don't know exactly what is going to be offered or what will be agreed

to, but my plan is to listen very carefully to all of those amendments.

I think they all have value. I may vote against some of them;

nonetheless, I think it is important that we have this discussion, have

this debate, and show our leadership for this Nation on this very

issue.

There are two Members, two really great leaders, I wish to commend;

that is, Senator Collins and Senator Lieberman. They have done a

fantastic job and have demonstrated the patience of Job through this

process in their determination and commitment. They are a prime example

of how this Senate can work and should work and how great things can be

accomplished by working together.

I think it is incumbent for us as a Senate and as a Congress to

provide the tools and the structure that we need in our intelligence

community to connect the dots.

I think the 9/11 Commission said this in a number of ways in a number

of cases. But at one point, the 9/11 Commission report said:

I know because I have talked to many of my colleagues on both sides

of the aisle that this body is committed to reforming itself when it

comes to intelligence issues.

Let me read, if I may, from the report one short paragraph found on

page 105 of the 9/11 Commission Report. It says:

Madam President, my hope is when we finish this bill--it looks as

though next week, realistically at this point--we will then turn to the

work of reforming congressional oversight. Members on both sides of the

aisle are very committed to doing that.

Let me speak for a moment or two about an amendment I was able to

tack on in committee. Again, I thank the leadership in the committee

but also thank the entire committee because in the end, after we

explained this and worked through this and walked through this, we

decided this was an amendment that should be added to the bill, and it

currently is in the proposed legislation.

Basically, one thing the 9/11 Commission Report said is we need to

have a way to evaluate our intelligence structures. It is important as

we pass this reform legislation, the most significant reform of

intelligence since 1947, to build into it some sort of look-back

provision. That is what we have tried to do with my amendment. I am

glad the committee has agreed with this and has been able to go along

with this.

Basically, it requires the GAO to give a report in 2 years, an

independent objective look at what we have done--have we been

successful? Have we failed? Do we need to take away a little bit here

or add a little bit there? But an independent evaluation, nonpartisan

look at exactly what we have done to make sure it is working. It is too

important to not get it right the first time.

For example, the 9/11 Commission found a need-to-know culture of

information protection rather than a need-to-share culture of

integration. The GAO review can indicate whether adequate mechanisms

have been put in place to change this culture and be more productive

and better, long term, for U.S. intelligence.

I thank the committee for its hard work. I thank the two leaders for

their hard work. I thank this entire body for approaching this

challenge in a very nonpartisan way.