Madam President, I too wish to welcome everyone back.

It had been my hope that the House of Representatives would have

appointed conferees on the supplemental appropriations bill for the

troops before their departure. I think it is extremely important we

finish that bill and get it down to the President for the veto we

believe is forthcoming over the language with regard to the troops, the

language which, in effect, dictates a withdrawal date and also the

excessive spending that is also a part of that

bill. So the sooner we can get through this process, the better.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a letter to me, week before last,

indicating that if we push this into late April, it creates a lot of

problems for the troops. So we hope we can get through this process,

resolve our differences, and get the money for the troops at the

earliest possible time.

As the majority leader has indicated, we will be going forward with

the stem cell issue. There is an alternative proposal by Senator

Coleman and Senator Isakson that we think solves some of the ethical

concerns and which will be considered by the Senate. Both will be

subjected to the 60-vote threshold, and it is my hope the Coleman-

Isakson bill, which could be signed by the President and will actually

make a difference, will make it through the legislative process and

down to the President for his signature.

Madam President, I yield the floor.