Mr. President, today Senate Republicans will agree to

move to debate on an important question, and that question is this:

Should a majority of Senators direct activities in the war in Iraq?

Republicans are eager to engage in this debate on the Reid resolution

because it is different in kind from any of the previous Democratic

proposals--very, very different.

It is unprecedented in the powers it would arrogate to Congress in a

time of war. It is a clear statement of retreat--a clear statement of

retreat from the support that the Senate only recently gave to GEN

David Petraeus, and its passage would be absolutely fatal to our

mission in Iraq.

Previous resolutions proposed by the Democrats were a mere statement

of opinion or of sentiment. This one has a binding quality. It would

interfere with the President and General Petraeus's operational

authority to conduct the war in Iraq as he and his commanders see fit.

It would substitute for their judgment the judgment of 535 Members of

Congress.

The judgment they have made in this, that Iraq is simply a

distraction on the Global War on terror and that U.S. troops should

begin to withdraw in months, with all combat forces leaving within a

year--that is the judgment that the Reid proposal makes. This is the

memo that our enemies have been waiting for. Osama bin Laden and his

followers have repeatedly said that the United States does

not have the stomach for a long fight with the terrorists. Passage of

the Reid joint resolution will be the first concrete sign since

September 11, 2001, that he was right on target.

Timetables are bad, but don't just take my word for it. Speaking at

the National Press Club in 2005, my good friend, the majority leader

himself, said this:

Six months after the majority leader made that observation, the

chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Biden, said this:

That was our friend, Joe Biden, the chairman of the Foreign Relations

Committee.

Shortly after Senator Biden's observation, Senator Clinton made the

same point, just 3 months after that:

Said Senator Clinton:

That is the majority leader, the chairman of the Foreign Relations

Committee, and a prominent Democratic candidate for President, all on

the wisdom of what this Reid proposal proposes to do, just a short time

back.

Surely Senators Reid, Biden, and Clinton have not changed their minds

about who would benefit the most--who would benefit the most if we set

a date certain for withdrawal. They know just as well as I do that this

is just what the terrorists have been waiting for and just what our

allies in Iraq and the entire region of the world have feared.

Setting a date certain for withdrawal will send a chill up the spine

of every Iraqi who has dared to stand with America. Millions of good

men and women have helped us in this fight. Since we arrived in Iraq,

nearly 120,000 Iraqis have volunteered to serve in their Army. More

than 8,000 Iraqis have died in uniform to defend the fledgling

democracy over there. And, recently, in Anbar Province, we are told

that roughly 1,000 Sunnis volunteered for a police force over a couple

of weeks.

These brave men and women are watching what we do. They know, as we

do, that chaos will engulf Iraq and the rest of the region on that day.

They know they and their families will likely face a firing squad soon

after we leave. The message we send them with this resolution is this:

Good luck.

General Petraeus understands the importance of the mission in Iraq

and his new mission to secure Baghdad. In a recent letter to the

soldiers under his command, he wrote as follows--General Petraeus said:

That is General Petraeus just recently. These are the words of the

man this body sent to Iraq unanimously. They are the words of a

military commander, confident yet realistic and committed above all to

victory. This is the voice of courage and resolve in the face of

danger. We do best to listen to voices such as this, which speak of

victory rather than defeat and withdrawal. We owe it to him, his

soldiers, our allies and the world.

Republicans are ready for this debate.

I have some more time, I gather?