Madam President, I am pleased the Senate has voted to

allow debate on the Iraq war to go forward. It is far past time we had

this important debate. It is far past time we brought our involvement

in this misguided war to a close.

Under the strong leadership of Senator Reid, the Democratic caucus

has produced a joint resolution that takes a significant step toward

ending our involvement in the war in Iraq. I support the resolution,

and I hope my colleagues will do the same.

The resolution does not go as far as I would like. I continue to

believe the only way we are ultimately going to end the President's

failed policies in Iraq is by exercising Congress's power of the purse

to safely bring our troops out of Iraq. I have introduced legislation

that would do that, and I will continue to look for every opportunity

to bring up my bill for a vote.

I will support this resolution because it avoids the mistakes of

previous proposals to address Iraq. It does not allow the President's

misguided policies to continue. It does not tacitly reauthorize the

war. It does not focus solely on the so-called surge. This is binding

legislation that would bring to an end our involvement in perhaps the

greatest foreign policy mistake in our country's history.

Some of my colleagues continue to argue that Congress should defer to

the Commander in Chief when it comes to Iraq, that we should give him

the opportunity to change course in Iraq or that we should allow his

escalation plan a chance to succeed. Those arguments ignore our

congressional responsibilities.

Madam President, at the conclusion of my remarks, I

would be happy to yield.

Congress authorized this war, and it is in our power to bring it to a

close. More importantly, we have not just the power but the

responsibility to end a war that is draining vital national security

resources in pursuit of a goal that cannot be achieved militarily.

The political problems that are driving much of the insurgency and

sectarian strife in Iraq are tragic and important. They require the

attention of U.S. policymakers. They do not require--in fact, they

cannot be solved by--a massive and indefinite U.S. military presence in

Iraq.

Some of my colleagues raise the specter of dire consequences if we

redeploy U.S. forces from Iraq. That is precisely why we need a

strategic approach to redeployment, one that addresses ongoing

instability and other threats, with our intelligence, diplomatic,

economic and, in a limited manner, military capabilities. Not only is

the continuation of this war not going to end sectarian and insurgent

violence, it puts off the day when we develop a comprehensive strategy

for Iraq that is sustainable, and that fits squarely within the larger

struggle of fighting al-Qaida.

As long as the President's policies continue, our troops will

continue to put their lives on the line, our constituents will continue

putting billions of their dollars into this war, our military readiness

will continue to erode, our Guard and Reserve members will continue to

face heavy burdens, and our ability to respond to an array of national

security challenges will continue to suffer a great deal. From Somalia

to Afghanistan to the ongoing fight against al-Qaida, we face threats

and challenges that require serious attention and resources. Right now,

far too much of both are being spent on a single country. It is this

single-minded and self-defeating policy that needs to end, and it is up

to Congress to do so.

Time and again, the President has made it clear that nothing--not the

wishes of the American people, not the advice of military and foreign

policy experts, not the concerns of Members of both parties--will

dissuade him from pursuing policies in Iraq that are not working. Faced

with a clear mandate from the voters last November, the President just

stalled for time, and then he announced not just a continuation but an

escalation of his policy. So Congress cannot wait for the President to

change course. We need to change the course ourselves.

This resolution recognizes, and acts on, that reality. It would

effectively terminate the misguided resolution authorizing force in

Iraq, while allowing a minimal number of troops to remain to perform

very limited functions: protecting personnel and infrastructure,

training and equipping Iraqi forces, and conducting certain targeted

counterterrorism operations. The latter provision is a particular

priority of mine, which is why my original legislation includes exactly

the same language.

Clearly, the United States has an ongoing role to play in addressing

the terrorist threat in Iraq. While Iraq was not a hotbed of terrorism

before the President led us to war in that country, al-Qaida and its

allies are trying to use the anger and frustrations unleashed by that

war to their advantage. Like Afghanistan and Somalia, Iraq will need to

be closely monitored to ensure that it does not become a failed state

and a breeding ground for terrorism, and we must be prepared to pursue

targeted missions to take out terrorists.

But maintaining 140,000 U.S. troops in Iraq is not the way to defeat

al-Qaida. Military operations of any size will only succeed if they are

combined with other measures--including diplomatic, economic, and

intelligence measures--as part of a comprehensive strategy for

defeating the terrorists who threaten our country. Al-Qaida is

not a one-country franchise; it is a global threat that requires a

global response.

The Reid resolution would require the President to begin redeploying

combat forces not essential to the three limited functions I just

mentioned within 120 days, with a goal of finishing redeployment by the

end of March 2008. While I support a faster redeployment with a firm

deadline, these provisions are, in fact, binding and would make clear

that the President's commitment to an open-ended, massive military

mission in Iraq is over. That is what the American people want, and

that is what this Congress should ensure.

Regardless of what happens this week, I believe the introduction of

this resolution, with the cosponsorship of some 41 Senators, represents

a significant step toward ending the war. The overwhelming majority of

Democrats are saying that the war must come to a close and that they

are prepared to take binding steps to do just that. The question each

of us will face as this debate continues is how to best end our

involvement in the war and redeploy our troops.

I look forward to the opportunity to offer an amendment to the

upcoming supplemental that would actually use Congress's appropriations

power to require the safe redeployment of our troops. While I do not

agree with much of what has been said by those in this body who

continue to defend a disastrous war, they are right about one point: If

we are serious about opposing the war, we must be serious about ending

funding for the war.

I am pleased the Senate has voted to allow debate on the Reid

resolution to go forward. Unfortunately, however, some in this body

continue to make arguments that undermine the ability of Congress to

have a serious discussion about the Iraq war. They fail to recognize

that this body has an obligation to address the most pressing issue

facing the country today and respond to the overwhelming sentiment of

our constituents. They purport to defend the President's prerogatives

and the morale and well-being of our troops, but their rhetoric has the

effect of trying to stifle open and honest debate.

While I cannot speak for the President, I am confident our troops,

and our constituents, are ready for this debate. They know that in a

democracy such as ours, discussion of major foreign policy issues can

and should be conducted openly. So I am glad the Senate is beginning

such a discussion today, and I will continue pushing this body to

finally bring to a close our involvement in a war that has been a

disaster on so many fronts.

Madam President, I am now happy to yield for a question to the

Senator from Kansas.

Madam President, I wish to thank the Senator from

Kansas, first of all, for his kind words and for listening to my speech

and for being present to do so. He has endangered himself politically

by saying kind words about me and my resolution in front of some groups

who may find that a little strange. But I do enjoy working with him,

and I especially enjoyed working with him when he was the chairman of

the Intelligence Committee.

I, of course, want to do exactly what the Senator from Kansas has

said. I want to have a debate and a vote on the approach I have

suggested. As I just indicated in my remarks, I believe that is the

next thing which needs to happen after we have this debate.

Just so the record is clear, though, the Democrats have agreed to

vote on S.J. Res. 9 and the McCain amendment and the Gregg amendment

and the Warner resolution, as well as the Reid resolution. So the

Republicans objected to that.

I would like to do that, but I think probably the

appropriate place to do that is the supplemental.

I would object on behalf of the leadership because I

agreed that this should be the next step and we should take up this

resolution.

I say to the Senator from Kansas, this resolution before us, the Reid

resolution, makes perfect sense. What it does is it says: Look, we no

longer believe the authorization that was given in 2002 makes sense,

and it severely limits that resolution and moves us in the right

direction. So I think that is the proper step. The supplemental bill is

about to come up. I think that is the right place, given that it has to

do with funding, for the type of amendment I have suggested. So I would

object on behalf of the leadership.

But I do look forward very much to the day not only when we debate

this but when I persuade you that it is a good idea that we cut off the

funding in order to bring the troops safely home--which, by the way, is

what we did--and I assume Senator Roberts was involved in this as

well--with Somalia. The Senator remembers ``Black Hawk Down.'' He knows

it well. We lost 18 people. We decided: This isn't working out. This

isn't a good idea. What did the Senate do? It passed legislation that

said by a certain date we will no longer fund this military mission,

but it gave plenty of time to get the troops out, and they got out

successfully. That is the nature of what I propose to do with an

amendment on the supplemental.

Step 1 was our vote here in this body and in the House

to say that the surge was unwise, and a majority did vote for that

here, as well as in the House. This is step 2. This says that the

fundamental underpinnings of this mistake should be reversed, that the

resolution authorizing force in Iraq should be reversed. Yes, step 3,

in my view, would be saying--to enforce it. Since the President won't

listen to us, we need to turn to the ultimate power, the one the

Senator from Kansas and I both agree is the appropriate power in this

situation; that is, whether to use the power of the purse to remove

funding.

We are on step 2.

I think we would be best to do it on the supplemental.

That seems to be the appropriate vehicle.

We need to get to that.

I think the Senator from Kansas is on shaky ground with

some people now. But I think the Senator from Kansas should know that

we are essentially in the heat of agreement here; the only question is

the order in which it should happen. The exact questions the Senator

has discussed should be debated in the Senate. I hope they are debated

soon. Guess what. We just had a debate, so we are having a debate, and

this is the beginning, and we will continue it.