Mr. President, I have a lot of respect for the Senator

from California, but I couldn't disagree with her more on this topic,

and I will explain why.

This resolution that is currently before the Senate calls for the

President to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq within 120 days. It

calls for withdrawing all combat forces from Iraq--all combat forces

from Iraq--by March 31, 2008, and it calls for limiting the flexibility

of our military commanders to go after the enemy.

None of these provisions strikes me as wise or a good idea. And it is

not just me. Let me quote from January 31, 2005, a speech made by one

of our distinguished Members at the National Press Club. This

distinguished Senator said: ``As far as setting a timeline, that is not

a wise decision, because it only empowers those who don't want us

there.'' Who was that speaker? Well, none other than our majority

leader, Senator Harry Reid, Democrat from Nevada, who said, ``It is not

a wise decision to set a timeline, because it only empowers those who

don't want us there.''

Senator Reid was not the only one. Senator Clinton said, ``I don't

believe it's smart to set a date for withdrawal. I don't think you

should ever telegraph your intentions to the enemy so they can await

you.'' That was a comment she made on February 13, 2007.

Senator Joe Biden, Democrat from Delaware, said: ``A deadline for

pulling out will only encourage our enemies to wait us out.'' He said

that on June 21, 2005, in a speech at the Brookings Institution in

Washington, DC.

I think we find ourselves in a time warp, but it is hard to know

whether the distinguished majority leader's position is what he says

today, when he says we ought to set a timeline for the withdrawal of

troops, or whether we ought to credit his remarks made in 2005, when he

said it is not a wise decision because it only empowers the enemy.

I think we know where the differences come down. There are those, as

the distinguished Senator from California said a few moments, who

regard what we are doing in Iraq, and she used these words, as

``mission impossible.'' In other words, there are those who simply have

given up, who believe all is lost and there is nothing we can possibly

do to reverse the tide in Iraq and in the global war on terror, what

Zarqawi, the former head of al-Qaida in Iraq, called the central front

in al-Qaida's war against the rest of the civilized world.

What I would suggest is that this resolution, which calls for

withdrawing troops beginning in the next 120 days, sets a hard deadline

of March 31, 2008, to withdraw all troops and which limits the

flexibility of our military commanders to go after the enemy. This is

not a plan to succeed. This is a plan destined to fail. Because, in

fact, to give the critics some credit, they have given up, so they

believe all that is left is retreat, to admit defeat. But this Senator

is not prepared to give up on either the mission or the members of our

military who are carrying out that mission in Iraq.

Arbitrary deadlines for withdrawal and micromanaging our military

commanders on the ground is not a military strategy, it is a recipe for

defeat. The problem is the new majority and the Democrat strategy can

best be characterized as one of slow bleed, micromanage, and say nice

things about supporting the troops but don't support the mission we

sent them on. I have said before, and I will say it again, if you

believe all is lost and there is no possibility of success in the war

in Iraq, to me, the logical conclusion is you would defund the effort

to support that mission there. In other words, you would use the tool

that is available to Members of Congress, the power of the purse, to

cut off the funds.

I disagree with that. I don't think we should. But Senator Dodd and

Senator Feingold have been the ones who have said, you know what,

passing nonbinding resolutions is simply not worthy of the Senate.

Nowhere else in life can you pass a nonbinding resolution, make a

``no'' decision and be credited for doing anything. Only here in

Washington, only in the Senate can you pass a nonbinding resolution and

somebody says, you know what, we have done something. Well, the fact

is, the only thing we would have done is to lend encouragement to those

who want to see us fail in Iraq and to possibly undermine the morale

and support given for our troops who are in harm's way.

Giving the enemy a timetable when American troops should withdraw

from Iraq only helps the enemy plan on how to accomplish their goals,

not ours.

Our focus should be, how can we succeed in Iraq. The irony of this

proposal--the best I can tell, the 17th proposal that has come from the

majority since we began talking about Iraq resolutions--is it comes at

a time when the new Baghdad security plan appears to be making some

hopeful signs toward success. One of those signs is Muqtada al-Sadr,

the radical Shiite cleric who is in charge of the Shiite militias in

Iraq, has fled the country because he knows the American military and

our Iraqi allies are beginning to enter areas such as Sadr City, which

have been in his sole province and domain. He has left to go to Tehran,

to Iran. Similarly, he has instructed the Mahdi armies, the Shiite

militias, not to confront the American soldiers or Iraqi allies as they

go in to clear, hold, and build in some of the previously most

dangerous areas of Iraq, that of Sadr City.

Democrats have offered 17 proposals on how to lose in Iraq but not a

single proposal on how to succeed. The chairman of the Senate Armed

Services Committee, Senator Levin, recently conceded that there are

between 5,000 and 6,000 members of al-Qaida in Iraq--specifically in Al

Anbar Province. To pass legislation that sets an arbitrary deadline for

withdrawing our combat forces without defeating al-Qaida in Iraq makes

no sense. Rather, it would provide potentially a safe haven, a power

vacuum into which al-Qaida could reestablish itself, gain a foothold,

and use that platform as a place to launch terrorist attacks against

the United States and other countries.

The Iraqis know our commitment to Iraq is not open-ended, so it is

simply not accurate to say that is the position of either the

administration or anyone in this body. No one has made an open-ended

commitment to Iraq. The Iraqis understand that the future of Iraq is in

the hands of Iraqis, and that is exactly where it should be.

But to pass legislation that micromanages how our troops should fight

and to try to make tactical decisions on how to handle those 130,000 or

so troops on the ground from Washington, DC, is simply crazy. We

unanimously confirmed GEN David Petraeus, who essentially is the

architect of the counterinsurgency plan now being carried out in

Baghdad. General Petraeus will lead our operations in Iraq and,

frankly, he doesn't need armchair generals here in Washington, DC,

trying to tell him what to do. General Petraeus knows what to do, and

that is the reason the Senate unanimously confirmed him to carry out

this new Baghdad security plan.

If Members of this body really support our troops, then they will

provide our troops with the resources they need to accomplish their

mission and not engage in a slow-bleed strategy of cutting off

resources or reinforcements. We all want our troops to come home as

soon as possible. But any decision to withdraw from Iraq should be

based strictly upon national security considerations and not on

political expediency.

We find that even our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are

conflicted internally about the best strategy as reflected by this now

17th iteration of their resolution strategy. A Washington Post

editorial dated March 13 labels the restrictions on Iraq war funding

drawn up by House Democrats--and the 17th proposal on Iraq, by the

way--this is the Washington Post. They called it ``something of a

trick,'' and is merely ``an inflexible timetable, conforming to the

need to capture votes in Congress or at the 2008 polls.''

Then an article in the Wall Street Journal yesterday quotes House

Appropriations Committee chairman, Democrat of Wisconsin, David Obey,

saying this about the language contained in the wartime spending bill

passed or being considered in the House--specifically regarding the

benchmarks laid out for Iraq. Mr. Obey is quoted as saying:

Mr. Obey said:

The Vice President was quoted as saying this on March 12, and I

couldn't agree with him more in this regard. He said:

I couldn't agree with the Vice President any more than in those

quoted remarks. We have now had 17 different proposals from Democrats

in the Senate to date. Maybe there are more to come but 17 so far. For

my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to propose this ever-

shifting plan of how to deal with Iraq is simply not constructive.

I must say that it is simply absurd that we would tell our enemy when

we plan to leave Iraq. I am joined in that belief by Senator Clinton

and Senator Reid, from the statements I quoted earlier.

This Senator is not prepared to give up on our men and women in

uniform, and I am not prepared to agree to arbitrary timetables or

strings on the money that we appropriate that will limit their ability

to be successful. I hope all of us, Republican or Democrat alike--all

Americans would hope that our American soldiers, sailors, marines, and

airmen will come back home safely but after they have accomplished the

mission we have asked them to take on, and that is to leave Iraq in a

condition where it is stabilized, where it is able to govern itself and

defend itself. Only then will we have eliminated another safe haven for

al-Qaida and terrorist activities. Only then will we have reduced to

the barest possible minimum the likelihood that we will have to return

following a regional conflagration, following a vast humanitarian

crisis and ethnic cleansing that is likely to occur if we do not take

every possible step to see this Baghdad security plan succeed.

Yes, we all want our troops to come home as soon as possible. Some of

us are not willing to set arbitrary deadlines or to bring our troops

back home based on some calendar that bears no relationship to

conditions on the ground. We want them to come home as soon as

possible, but after they have accomplished the mission that they so

bravely have taken on and in which they are so nobly led by GEN David

Petraeus.

I believe S. Res. 9 is misguided. It should be defeated, and I will

do everything within my power to urge my colleagues to so vote.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.