Mr. President, I urge us to move forward and consider the

Iraq resolution so that every Member of this body can speak on this

issue, we can debate it, and we can cast our votes on what we believe

the policy should be for the United States in Iraq.

I would like to take us back to October of 2002. I was in the other

body in October 2002. I voted against the resolution that gave the

President the right to use force in Iraq. Let's remember the basis on

which that resolution was passed. We were told that Iraq was in

violation of U.N. resolutions concerning weapons of mass destruction

and we needed to have the option to use military force in order to

enforce that resolution and get rid of weapons of mass destruction.

The United States was also concerned about the war against terror,

and there were statements made about the war on terror. I might tell

you, there was no evidence that Iraq was involved in the attacks on our

country on September 11. And, yes, there was a desire by many to get

rid of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

What has happened since then? Our American troops have been in Iraq.

We found no weapons of mass destruction. There are serious questions as

to the intelligence information we had and how that was relayed to all

of us. Saddam Hussein is gone. He has been removed. The Iraqi

Government is now in place. A constitution was adopted. A government

was elected. The Maliki government is now responsible for the affairs

of Iraq. Times have changed.

But the most significant change that has occurred in Iraq during the

last year has been the increased sectarian violence--a civil war. That

is what is taking place in Iraq today. It is clear the presence of the

U.S. military will not end the civil war. Iraqis need to end the civil

war through diplomacy and negotiations and the confidence of the people

in Iraq.

Something else has changed in the last year. We had national

elections in our country, midterm elections. The people asked for

change. Now there is a change in the Congress, and during the first few

months of this Congress, we have held over 40 oversight hearings on

what is happening in Iraq. I do not recall these hearings taking place

in the last Congress.

Those hearings have pointed out--with expert after expert; military

expert, foreign policy expert--we are not going to end the sectarian

violence in Iraq by increasing American troops. We cannot win it on the

battlefield. We have to deal with it and negotiate a settlement in

Iraq.

We have before us the Reid resolution. We also have before us the

President's current policies in Iraq. Do we want more of the same--an

escalation of troops, a continuation of U.S. military presence in Iraq

in the midst of a civil war--or do we want a change in direction? The

Reid resolution represents a change in direction. It is a change in

direction as it relates to U.S. troop levels.

We have lost almost 3,200 American troops, 68 from my own State of

Maryland. There is a civil war in which American troops are not adding

to ending that civil war. We need to look at whether we want to

increase our troops, as the President wants, or to start redeploying

our troops so the Iraqis can stand up and defend their own country so

we can look for a political solution to what is happening in Iraq. We

can remove the big target on Americans. Public opinion in Iraq says it

is OK to kill Americans. We have to remove the American presence so we

can move forward.

The Reid resolution gives us a well-defined mission which we can

achieve, which is in the interest of the United States, that the Iraqis

would take responsibility for their own country, would have well-

trained security forces.

The resolution speaks to what we need to do as far as a surge in

diplomacy, to urge more countries to get involved so the Sunnis and

Shiites can live together and have confidence in their own government

that represents a change, that represents a direction that is in the

interest of the United States.

I urge us to be willing to debate this resolution and to vote on this

resolution. That is our responsibility. It is our responsibility as

Members of this body. It is our responsibility to our men and women who

are serving our Nation, our Armed Forces. It is a responsibility we owe

to our Nation. I urge my colleagues to move forward so we can go on

record and change the direction of America's participation in Iraq so

we can achieve the objectives that are in the interests of our Nation.

Mr. President, I yield back the floor.