Mr. President, first, I thank my colleague from Michigan. I

commend him, along with Senator Biden, my chairman of the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee, and our majority leader, Senator Reid, and

others for the tremendous effort they have put into these matters over

the last number of weeks. I haven't always agreed with my leaders in

the majority on the course of action, but I have respect for their

efforts to try and build consensus. I admire that. I always doubted

whether consensus is something we ought to try and get on an issue such

as this. Clarity, accountability, real proposals that require up-or-

down votes that result in action I think in the long term may be

necessary here. I respect immensely the efforts they have made to bring

as many people as is possible under the same umbrella in dealing with

this issue.

Once again, we find ourselves debating the same basic issue with

respect to United States policy in Iraq, namely, when is the President

going to admit his policy is a failure? From how many different places

do you have to hear that--from the Baker-Hamilton report, to the

analysis by military leaders. Over and over, the conclusion has been

the same. This is not a conclusion I have arrived at myself, it is one

that has been arrived at by almost every group of people or individuals

who know anything about this matter. This policy must be fundamentally

changed. The course must be changed to empower the Iraqis to take

responsibility for their collective future. If they do that, there is a

chance that stability and a better future for them can emerge. If they

don't, there is not a treasury deep enough or an army big enough to do

that for them.

How many debates, how many reports, how many more of our young men

and women are going to be killed or wounded until the President and his

advisers acknowledge the President's policy has been a failure,

unfortunately, from almost the outset?

How long will it be before the administration begins a true

diplomatic offensive to help the Iraqis and their neighbors secure a

political solution that everyone has concluded is the only possible way

this matter can have an outcome that offers some hope to the people of

that country?

How many times can the administration and some of our colleagues here

claim that any debate, any dissent, any action that departs one iota

from the President's policy is somehow unpatriotic, words we have heard

too often in this Chamber and elsewhere to describe those who have a

different point of view--I emphasize ``a point of view''--that has been

embraced by people without any adherence to a political party or

ideology who have reached the same conclusion that this policy is not

working at all.

Jingoism and facile claims about ``support the troops,'' about ``good

versus evil,'' about ``victory versus defeat'' can no longer, I think,

be tolerated--in fact, they should never have been tolerated in the

first place.

Let's stop invoking the inverted logic, as our colleague from

Virginia, Senator Webb, so aptly described it, of claiming that because

there are troops are in harm's way, we, therefore, have to stay the

course.

We all know we have troops in the field. We all honor the sacrifices

they have made. They are a remarkable group of people. Like many of my

colleagues, I have been there on several occasions over the past couple

of years. Regardless of one's view on policy, the admiration for the

job these individuals are doing ought to be very high. In my case, it

is. It is rather remarkable the service they are providing. It is the

policy that needs changing.

No one is suggesting our troops don't deserve all the support they

can get, but supporting our troops and opposing a policy ought not to

require the kind of gymnastics that some of our colleagues who oppose

any changes suggest.

Having troops deployed overseas should not prevent us from debating

critically important issues relating to the wisdom of staying the

failed course the President has charted. In fact, we do a grave

disservice to our troops by not having a public debate to shed light on

the many questions and concerns that arise from our current involvement

in Iraq.

I have publicly stated many times over recent months that this body

should urgently take strong, binding action to force the President to

change his Iraq policy. While this resolution before us does not

represent as forceful an approach to accomplishing that goal as I would

propose, it does take the United States one step closer to ending U.S.

combat involvement in Iraq, and for that reason I am going to support

it as a first step in what I think is the right direction.

This resolution goes beyond simply expressing disagreement with the

President, which is the problem I had with earlier resolutions. It puts

this Congress on record as authorizing a ``prompt commencement of

phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq.'' It spells out

the transition of the mission for the limited forces that would remain

after the phased redeployment of combat forces have been completed.

This resolution unequivocally states that the United States should

begin a phased redeployment of U.S. combat forces from Iraq. It states

that the American forces remaining in Iraq should have a very different

and more restricted mission: training, equipping Iraqi security forces,

force protection, and targeted counterterrorism operations.

Crucially, this resolution also states that the redeployment of U.S.

forces shall be part of a comprehensive, diplomatic, political, and

economic strategy, and it requires the President to develop such a

strategy, a strategy that has been seemingly nonexistent and that is

critical to the stabilization of Iraq.

I am concerned, however, that the resolution allows for as many as

120 days from the date of enactment to pass before the President must

commence the redeployment of U.S. combat forces. I firmly believe this

redeployment can and must begin far sooner, and that we should set a

hard target date for the completion of this phased redeployment rather

than a soft goal of the end of March 2008, as stated in the resolution.

We face a region-wide crisis of credibility, a crisis that was caused

by very bad policy choices rather than fate, as some would suggest.

While the United States may still remain an enormous military power,

and we are, our power to influence has been greatly diminished,

unfortunately. It is this power to influence that is critical, I think,

to America's interest in the region and to the future of Iraq and its

neighbors.

It is my strong hope that the passage of this resolution will bring

the United States one step closer to ending our intervention in Iraq's

civil war and one step closer to developing and employing critical,

comprehensive, diplomatic, political, and economic strategies in Iraq

and in the wider region.

Based on past experience, however, I have no confidence whatsoever

that this President will pay any attention to this resolution or this

congressional debate. That has been the history of the administration

over the past many months. So I say to my colleagues, if you are truly

sincere in your support, as I believe you are, for the policies

expressed in this legislation, then I think we must be prepared to do

far more in the coming days, I hope in the short days, to bring an end

to this destructive and futile policy, including the exercise of the

congressional powers of the purse. We need to stop financing the

administration's reckless strategy and put critical resources into

rebuilding our military. Our troops deserve no less from this Congress.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.