Madam President, I would like to particularly commend

the leader, Senator Reid, and the chairman of the Armed Services

Committee, Senator Levin, for the work that has been done in putting

together a resolution which, as much as possible, can meet some of the

objectives of the Democratic majority of this body at the present time.

That is not an easy task.

I think Members who participated in this effort took into

consideration that in less than a week our Nation will mark 4 years in

Iraq. We have spent nearly $400 billion. We have lost more than 3,000

Americans. More than 140,000 of our own brave men and women find

themselves trying to salvage a situation that simply cannot be solved

through military force.

If I believed there was any chance the military could solve the

problem of hundreds of years of hatred between Sunni and Shia by

resolving what is effectively a civil war, I would believe this surge

and more troops might solve this situation. But I do not.

The only solution rests with the Iraqi Government and the Shia

majority. The Iraq of today is embroiled in four different wars--a

terribly complex civil conflict that even General Petraeus, our

commander in Iraq, says requires a political solution.

Simply put, there is no end in sight. Yet the President insists on

escalating our troop presence there. None of this makes sense to me

because I deeply believe we must change our course in Iraq. That is why

I support the joint resolution before us today.

Where the administration expands our involvement in Iraq, this

resolution sets a time limit. Where the administration sees a military

solution, this resolution recognizes that the solution must be

political. Where the administration calls for more money and more

troops, this resolution says: Enough is enough. Where the

administration fails to put demands on the Iraqi Government, this

resolution tells them: You must take responsibility for your own

future.

The Iraqis must realize our commitment is not open-ended and they

must stand on their own. How can we ever expect that Iraqis will be

able to stand up and make the political choices if we keep such a

large, sustained American troop presence in Iraq? We become the buffer,

then, that prevents the solution. Only the Iraqis can choose to end

this civil war. Only the Iraqis can unify their country if, in fact,

the Shia majority want a unified Iraq. Yet this will never happen until

we begin to draw down our troop levels. This resolution does exactly

that. It is a vehicle for the Congress to show leadership, to tell the

President that he has put us on the wrong course and that a political

solution is the key to this conflict.

This resolution sets us on that path. It spells out clear deadlines:

The phased redeployment of our combat forces must begin within 120 days

of the resolution's passage. A goal of March 31, 2008, would be

established for the redeployment of our combat forces out of Iraq. This

resolution also redefines the mission. A smaller force could remain in

Iraq. The mission would be limited to force protection, training and

equipping Iraqi troops, and targeted counterterrorism operations.

It is, in a way, similar to the resolution I introduced last month

which set an expiration date for the 2002 authorization for the use of

military force in Iraq.

This resolution fills a void. It puts a long-term political,

diplomatic, and economic strategy for Iraq at the center of our

national policy. That is where I believe it should have been a long

time ago. It is consistent with the views of the American people, whose

opposition to this war and this escalation or surge remains strong and

sustained to this very day. But instead of following the will of the

American people, this administration is pursuing a surge in forces

which appears to be growing. The administration has not set any limits

on the number of troops needed or on the duration of the mission or the

cost to the American people.

In January, the President said he would send an additional 21,500

troops to Iraq at a projected cost of $5.6 billion. Yet just this week

the White House asked the Congress for another $2.5 billion to pay for

an additional 4,700 support troops for the surge in Iraq. The costs

keep rising.

The Pentagon initially said it would be only a matter of months

before we could assess whether the surge was a success. I believe the

new Secretary of Defense, Secretary Gates, said we should know within 4

months whether this surge is successful. But the commanders on the

ground now suggest we may have to sustain the escalation until well

into next year. Yet it is clear our military is under such strain that

the only way to maintain those 20 brigades is by extending the

deployment of many of our soldiers in Iraq, and by making many more

deploy overseas much earlier than planned.

We are breaking our own military in Iraq, even as it becomes

increasingly evident that success cannot be achieved militarily.

Just consider these facts. More than 420,000 troops have been

deployed at least twice; 420,000 men and women have been deployed

twice. More than 50,000 troops have had their tours extended through

``stop-loss'' orders. Troops are being rushed into the field without

proper training and without

enough armor. We are leaning more and more heavily on the National

Guard. Yet 90 percent of the Guard units in the United States are rated

``not ready.''

I understand why the President may wish to talk about ``encouraging

signs'' in Iraq. But the facts show otherwise. Even while the violence

in Baghdad has decreased, violence outside the capital has increased.

Two hundred Shia pilgrims have been killed in just the past week alone.

As insurgents have left Baghdad to avoid the ongoing military

crackdown, they have simply melted away into outlying regions, waiting

for the pressure to ease.

What makes anybody think this will be any different by the end of

this year, the middle of next year, or the end of next year, or any

other time? While more American soldiers deploy to Baghdad, the Iraqis

have yet to provide all the troops they promised.

There is no end in sight. This joint resolution changes that. It

changes course. It redefines the mission. I urge the Senate to vote for

it.

I thank you, and I yield the floor.