Mr. President, a few moments ago, the Iraq Study Group

presented their report. This is an historic document. It is 142 pages

long and easily read. Within the confines of this publication is a very

important message. I want to salute, first, the members of this Iraq

Study Group. These men and one woman have risen to the call of public

service in a way that is exemplary for all of us who are involved in

public life. Former Secretary of State James Baker, former Congressman

Lee Hamilton, Lawrence S. Eagleburger, Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., Edwin

Meese, III, former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Leon E.

Panetta, William J. Perry, former Senator Charles S. Robb, and former

Senator Alan K. Simpson have produced a bipartisan report on a war that

troubles every single American, and their conclusion in this report is

clear. Their conclusion is it is time for the American troops to leave

Iraq and begin coming home. Their conclusion is that we are no longer

waiting, if we ever were, for the permission of Iraq for this to

happen. Instead, we are putting Iraq on notice that it is time for them

to stand and make the important decisions for their future that will

lead to stability in that nation.

They have shown, with this report, an impatience and frustration

which has been shared with the American people. On November 7, Election

Day, the American people were very clear. They said overwhelmingly by

their votes across America they want a change in our policy in Iraq. It

is no longer acceptable to lose so many of our best and bravest

soldiers, no longer acceptable to be bringing these brave soldiers home

for communities to grieve and to pray over them, as we should, but we

must bring this to an end. Twenty thousand or more American soldiers

were disabled in this war, some of whom will struggle for a lifetime to

rebuild their lives and their futures. It is also time for us to bring

an end to the expenditure of money on the war in Iraq; $2 billion to $3

billion a week that we are spending.

At a time when we are cutting back on research at the National

Institutes of Health for medical research; at a time when we are unable

to fund No Child Left Behind, when we know that our children, our

future leaders, need a helping hand and we are unable to provide the

resources; at a time when we cannot help working families pay for their

health insurance, we are sending billions of dollars over for this war

in Iraq, a war that has now lasted longer than World War II.

The report of the Iraq Study Group is a call to action. It is a call

for change, and, quite frankly, it is a call on the

President, our Commander in Chief, to move forward with new leadership

and with a new candor in dealing with the people of Iraq.

They also make a bold suggestion, which I endorse, that we need to

open the diplomatic front. We need to bring to the table in the Middle

East many countries that we have shunned for a long period of time,

countries that, frankly, we disagree with on many basic things. We need

to bring to that table Iran, a country which we have very few things in

common with but a country we need to bring in and discuss the future

stability in the Middle East. We need to bring Syria to the table as

well, in the hopes that they will become an agent for positive change

in the Middle East and for stability. There are some who will disagree

with that, but I am not one of them. I recall, in the darkest days of

the Cold War, we would sit down with the Russians, we would sit down

with Soviet leaders, we would try to work out differences, try to find

ways to bring a peaceful resolution to many contentious problems. That

was the American way then, and it should be now in the Middle East.

I salute the Iraq Study Group. They have given us a guidepost. They

have given us a roadmap, in terms of our future policy in Iraq, and

now, with the American people calling for change, with the Iraq Study

Group on a bipartisan basis calling for change, now, the responsibility

shifts to the President of the United States. I hope that he will

demonstrate his commitment to change by beginning to redeploy American

troops out of Iraq starting in January of next year. If we are to meet

the goal of this Iraq Study Group of the American combat forces

redeployed out of Iraq by March of 2008, then we need to begin that

process and begin it as soon as possible. For our soldiers, for their

families, for the American people, the President needs to begin this

redeployment.