Mr. President, I will use leader time.

Mr. President, I have the deepest respect for the Senator from Maine.

I care about her a lot. She is a good legislator and a very strong

woman, strong person, someone who stands up for what she thinks is

right. I admire her for that.

However, those are interesting comments that I have just heard from

my friend regarding an Iraq debate. While I respect the Senator from

Maine and, as I have said I appreciate her sense of urgency, I say with

all due respect, she is coming late to the party.

Last week, when Senators had the opportunity to hold an important

debate about Iraq, she and others chose to prevent that debate. Some of

them, including my friend from Maine, voted against their own

resolution by not invoking cloture. While it is heartening to know that

they would like to have an Iraq debate now, where were they last week?

Where were they when the Senate was trying to send a message to

President Bush to stop the escalation? Where were they when we were

trying to send a message in standing up for our troops in Iraq? The

answer: Obstructing. Playing politics.

Don't tell me about politics. They were putting the political needs

of the White House ahead of our troops' need for a new direction in

Iraq.

If not for the actions that took place last week, we could have been

finished with this debate regarding the escalation in Iraq. We could

have already sent a strong message to President Bush that he stands

alone in supporting escalation. We could have joined the House in

expressing our support for the troops and our opposition to the so-

called surge. But because there was a political game being played with

the war, the American people still do not know where their Senators

stand on escalation.

I take it from comments I have heard--not only from the Senator from

Maine but from others on the other side of the aisle--that a number of

Members had a change of heart; that, in the future, I would hope, many

of them will be joining us in an important Iraq debate.

Everyone within the sound of my voice should understand, we are in

the Senate. Procedurally it is very difficult, many times, to get from

here to there. I started as quickly as I could to process this matter.

On Tuesday, I moved to rule XIV so we could have the House resolution

before the Senate. I would hope we will have that opportunity soon.

This week, the House of Representatives is debating a bipartisan

resolution on escalation. Last night, as I have indicated, I started

the process--again, moving one step further to bringing the legislation

closer to the floor of the Senate, a resolution saying we support our

troops and we oppose the escalation.

When the Senate returns after the break, we will deal with the House

resolution in some manner. The American people deserve, as I have said,

to know where every Member of the Senate stands on the so-called surge.

It is an important issue facing our country.

I repeat what I said about the Senator from Maine. I care about her a

lot. But I really am somewhat lost in the logic of her debate.