Mr. President, I yield myself 10 minutes of the time

controlled by the majority.

Last night, President Bush asked the American people to support a

surge of military troops in Iraq. Many are using the term ``surge,''

though the President didn't. Make no mistake, this is a dramatic

escalation of our troop presence in Iraq. In the debate leading into

the President's speech, the term ``surge'' was used, which implied

something that was limited and temporary. An escalation is where we are

heading, which means a long-term commitment with no end in sight.

We are in a hole in Iraq, and the President says the way to dig out

of this hole is to dig deeper. Does that make sense? When you are in a

hole, do you get out by digging deeper? This is a reckless plan; it is

about saving the Bush Presidency, it is not about saving Iraq.

Before Congress can act on this plan--and act we must--there are

several questions that need to be answered. I need those answers, you

need those answers, the American people need those answers and, more

importantly, our troops and their families need those answers. Is this

policy achievable? Is it sustainable? What is the President's objective

in calling for this escalation of troops? Who is the enemy? Does the

Bush administration even know anymore? When our troops are embedded

with Iraqi forces, are they going to shoot Sunnis or Shiites? Are we

taking sides in a civil war? I don't think we know. What is the Iraqi

Government going to do for itself? We suddenly have something called

benchmarks. Where have those benchmarks been for the last several

years? What is going to be the political solution that only the Iraqis

can do to resolve the power sharing with Sunni, Shiite, and Kurds?

Where are the oil revenues that were talked about to pay for this war?

When is the Iraqi Government going to end the corruption in their own

ministries so that they can come to grips with services, security, and

power sharing and oil revenue sharing?

Who is going to disarm the militias and insurgents and, more

importantly, who is going to keep them disarmed? Are we going to be in

those neighborhoods forever? Where are the troops going to come from

for this escalation? Our military, our wonderful military is worn thin.

Also, how are we going to pay for it? While China builds up its

reserves, we build up our debt.

Make no mistake, though. U.S. troops cannot do what the Iraqi

Government will not do for itself. Iraq needs a functioning government

that produces security and services for its own people. It needs a

government of reconciliation that will function on behalf of the Iraqi

people. Iraq needs its own security forces up and running. No matter

what training we give them, they have to have the will to fight. They

need to put an end to the sectarian violence, and they need to end

this corruption in their own ministries to get oil production moving

and a way to share those oil revenues.

There are those who say: Well, what about supporting our troops? I

absolutely do support our troops. And for those troops who are in Iraq,

let me say this: Your Congress will not abandon you.

But the best way to support the troops is not to send them on this

reckless mission. The best way to support our troops is to bring them

home safely and swiftly. That is why I voted against this preemptive

war in the first place. In my speech when I was 1 of the 23, I said: We

don't know if we will be greeted with flowers or landmines. I said: We

shouldn't go to Iraq on our own. We need to go with the world if, in

fact, the weapons are there.

Well, from the very beginning, everything the Congress and the

American people have been told by this administration has proven not to

be so. It has either been an outright lie or dangerously incompetent.

The President asked the Congress to vote for a preemptive war because

Iraq was supposed to have weapons of mass destruction that posed an

imminent danger to the United States. Well, the Congress gave the

preemptive authority. However, the weapons of mass destruction were not

there.

I say to my colleagues, after all of those troops we sent, weren't

you filled with shock and awe to find out there were no weapons?

Then, the administration sent Colin Powell to the United Nations to

make the case for war. He is one of the most esteemed Americans in the

world, and the Bush administration set him up. Then--CIA Director Tenet

said it was going to be a slam dunk. To this day, Colin Powell cries

foul about what happened to him at the U.N. How can we trust the data

or judgment of an administration that continually gives us this fiasco?

Now, what about President Bush's good friend, Prime Minister Maliki?

I listened to my colleague from Texas. He said: Are we giving up on

Maliki? The question is, is Maliki giving up on Iraq. Are we cutting

the legs out from Maliki? I say no, Maliki's government has no legs.

They are not involved in dealing with the corruption, with power

sharing. It is the same Maliki who told our U.S. marines they couldn't

go into a neighborhood to go after a Shiite cleric called al-Sadr, who

bankrolls attacks on American soldiers. Is Maliki an honest broker in

Iraq or is he someone who represents the Shiites?

I don't have confidence in what we have been told by this

administration, and I have very serious doubts about the will of the

administration of Prime Minister Maliki. Make no mistake--and I feel so

deeply about this--a great American military cannot be a substitute for

a weak Iraqi Government. The stronger we are, the more permission we

give the Iraqis to be weak.

We were challenged a few minutes ago to say: Well, what is the

alternative? I say let's use the ideas that have come from our

commanders, which have now been put aside, the Iraq Study Group, and

others within the region. Let's use Baker-Hamilton as a starting point.

Let's send in the diplomats before we send in the troops. I don't

embrace all of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, but it is a

bipartisan way of going forward. It was not reckless. Once we send in

those troops, it is irrevocable. I think we need a new policy, and I

think we need a new direction. I think Baker-Hamilton gave us a good

direction to pull us together to go in, and I think that is where we

need to go.

Let me conclude by saying this: To our outstanding men and women in

uniform who are already in Iraq, you have a tough job, and we are proud

of you. Neither the Congress nor the American people will ever abandon

you. But to those troops who are waiting to head to Iraq, the best way

to support you is to say no to the President's reckless, flawed

escalation of this war in Iraq.

Again, let's send in the diplomats, not the troops.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.