Madam President, I rise today to speak again on the

mishandling of the debate over the Iraq war resolutions. This debate

has ramifications which will damage the institution of the Senate and

lower the morale of our troops.

Here is the truth the American people need to know: Republicans in

the Senate have not prevented any debate over the war in Iraq. We are

debating the war again today. We have debated the war in the past. And

we will continue to debate the war in the future. What we have

prevented is the majority leader dictating to the minority exactly

which resolutions we will vote on. My friends on the other side of the

aisle have misled the American people about this debate.

Our Republican leader, my colleague and close friend from Kentucky,

has tried to negotiate for more--I repeat--more debate on additional

resolutions expressing a broad range of viewpoints. This is the U.S.

Senate. The majority cannot tell the minority we are going to have one

vote--take it or leave it.

And let me be clear: I am not running from a vote on any of these

resolutions. I don't know one of my Republican colleagues who is afraid

to cast a vote on any of the proposed resolutions relating to Iraq. I

have said repeatedly and I will say it here again today: Nonbinding

resolutions that question military strategy are not in the best

interests of our Nation. They are not in the best interests of the

Senate. They don't have the effect of law. They only affect our

soldiers by sending them mixed signals. But if we must go down that

path, let's vote. However, the majority leader cannot dictate the terms

of the vote. If he could, this would be the House of Representatives.

But it is not. This is the U.S. Senate. This is a body with rules that

encourage opposing viewpoints, not stifling debate by the majority

leader hand-selecting one resolution and forcing the other 99 of us to

vote on it.

But here we are. Americans are watching this discussion right now.

And it is not just a debate about Senate floor procedures; this is

about how we as Senators should conduct debate when we have troops in

harm's way. Many Americans oppose our efforts in Iraq. That is their

right. I respect their convictions. Yet they are misguided, because I

believe the cost of failure in Iraq is too high to leave now. I do not

want to have to send American soldiers back to Iraq in a few years to

deal with an even tougher situation. I do not want to leave a breeding

ground of terror. But I understand there are many Americans who want

this war to end, regardless of the consequences of leaving soon. And no

doubt there are some in this body and in the House of Representatives

who share that same view.

We as a Congress can end this war, but we cannot end it by nonbinding

resolutions such as the one that passed the House of Representatives

this week that the majority leader now wants us to be forced to vote on

in the Senate. We can end this war through the appropriations process

by cutting off funds for this war. This is why I am so frustrated by

this debate. This is why I am frustrated by many of my friends and

colleagues in this great body.

Many want to vote on a nonbinding resolution that opposes our

strategy in Iraq to show their constituents they oppose the war, yet

not make the tougher decision through the appropriations process. I

know many of my colleagues who want to vote on this misguided House

resolution will not--I repeat--not vote to cut off the funding for this

war. They just want to have it both ways: they want to support a

nonbinding measure opposing the war but not actually to stop the war by

exercising their constitutional right to cut off its funding.

We should not vote to cut off the funding of this war. And that is

the basic theme of the Gregg resolution on which the majority leader

will not allow us to vote. The majority leader will not allow this vote

because he knows it will pass the Senate overwhelmingly. This does not

make sense to me or many of my colleagues, and I do not think it makes

sense to many Americans who have actually followed this debate closely.

That is why I will vote again today against moving to the misguided

House-passed resolution without the commitment that we Republicans be

allowed to offer our own resolution of our own choosing. Our

resolution, the Gregg resolution, gives support to our troops. Unlike

the resolution before us today, it does not send contradictory signals

to the troops by telling them that on one hand we oppose their mission

but on the other hand we support them as soldiers. That is not the

message we need to be sending to our troops at this critical time.