Madam President, I have been privileged to be a Member of

the Senate now in my 29th year. Never have I stood in the Senate and in

any way impugned the integrity of any Senator to speak as she or he

believes from their own heart about what is right. I have never tried

to challenge the patriotism of any Senator as they express their views.

I say to my colleagues, I entered this debate simply because I feel

the Senate of the United States of America, an institute revered

throughout the world, should have the right to go forward and debate

this critical issue before America today, before the whole world.

Over a week ago, I voted against cloture to support the rights of all

colleagues to be heard. That issue has been back and forth between our

two leaders now for some weeks. We have come to the point in time when

we must move forward. The only vehicle for those who wish to have this

institution move forward and fulfill its goal is to move, today, to

vote for cloture. I shall cast that vote, not with a heavy heart but

with a heart that I think I am doing right for the integrity of this

institution.

I have joined with my good friend Senator Ben Nelson, Senator

Collins,

and the other cosponsors, Senator Hagel, Senator Snowe, Senator

Coleman, Senator Voinovich, and Senator Smith, all of whom, once again,

signed onto this amendment, referred to as the Warner-Nelson-Collins

amendment.

We do so because we only wish to express a measure of disagreement on

one basic point--an important one--with our President. The United

States Congress is an independent branch of our Government. We are, as

we often say, a coequal branch of our Government. We have the right to

respectfully disagree. And we do so in our language. We support the

President on the diplomatic aspects of his plan. We support the

President on the economic aspects of his plan announced on the 10th of

January.

We only disagree with one portion of it: Madam President, do you need

21,500 additional men and women of the Armed Forces in this conflict--

indeed, it is more than that, as was testified before the Armed

Services Committee the other day--to go into the streets and the alleys

of Baghdad and to face an enemy which is largely today fighting a

sectarian war?

This country gave an enormous sacrifice of life and limb to give Iraq

its sovereignty. It is the duty of the Iraqi Armed Forces to take on

the sectarian fighting. The American GI does not know the language,

does not know the historic background of over 1,400 years of dispute

between the Sunni and Shia. And we have trained over 300,000 Iraqi

forces. Why not give those forces the responsibility to take on this

fight?

Our resolution in no way has anything to do with the cutoff of funds.

Senators stand up and castigate our resolution and claim it will cutoff

funding. It will not cutoff funding to our troops. It supports the

President. It supports the present level of all the troops throughout

Iraq. It simply says: Mr. President, are there not alternatives other

than using the American GI to put down this sectarian violence?

Madam President, I do hope, as we pursue this, we respect one another

and our rights in this institution because I feel ever so strongly that

our resolution supports the President economically, supports the

President diplomatically, states that the President is correct, and

clearly states that we cannot let this battle be lost and let the Iraqi

Government collapse. We do not wish to see the people of Iraq denied

the sovereignty that our blood, sweat, and toil have given them. We

stand by the President on that. We simply say: Mr. President, this

particular battle in Baghdad is best fought by the Iraqis. I regret to

say that a New York Times article--and I asked this in open testimony

before the Armed Services Committee a day or so ago to the Chief of

Staff of the Army and to the Commandant of the Marine Corps--the

accuracy of this report, that in the most recent battle there were

2,500 Americans and 200 Iraqi security forces. That is contrary to what

the President said. He said the Iraqis will take the point in this

battle. The President also said the Iraqis will bear the burden in this

battle, and we would be there in support. This is not support. We are

fighting that battle.

Again, this morning, I watched a report, presented by a U.S. general

from Iraq, who stated that progress is being made in the battle in

Iraq. Time and time again--he referred to the American forces making

progress. He referred only to the United States forces fighting that

battle, with no reference to the Iraqi forces. That is my point. That

is why I steadfastly take this floor and respectfully disagree with the

President. I will vote for the Gregg amendment. As a matter of fact,

the Gregg amendment is in the Warner amendment.