Madam President, we have seen 4 years of obfuscation on

Iraq from the White House and from previous leadership in this Senate.

Those days are over this afternoon. Every Senator is going to have to

step to the plate and say where he or she stands. The other side has

tried to design resolutions where they can duck, they can avoid, and

they don't tell their constituencies how they feel. Those days are

over.

That is why this cloture vote is a crucial vote, not just for the

moment or the week but for the history of America because today's vote

is not on other aspects of what is going on in Iraq or Iran but simply

this: Are you for or against the escalation? Plain and simple.

There should be a simple vote, not as an end to this debate but as a

beginning of this debate. The minority is tying itself into pretzels so

there will not be a vote. They are torn between their President's

policy and the wishes of their constituents. But vote they must. If

they avoid the vote this afternoon, their constituents will know

exactly what they are doing.

On the policy, the President's escalation is misguided, to put it

kindly. There is no change in strategy. We are policing a civil war in

Iraq--something no one talked about 2 years ago, something no one

bargained for. Our brave

young men and women, whom we so support, are standing in the crossfire

between Shiites and Sunnis. This is not a fight against terrorism; this

is a civil war, and there have been, unfortunately, thousands of them

throughout history. American troops should not be in the middle of that

war.

The President doesn't change the policy; he simply adds more troops

to continue this misguided policy. That is why the majority of this

Senate, and the overwhelming majority of the American people, are so

opposed to this escalation, and we will vote on it this afternoon. But

make no mistake about it, this is just the first step. It is just the

first step. This is a process. Some of my friends and colleagues wish--

and maybe we do, too--that there could be a silver bullet, one

resolution that could either end the escalation or even end the war.

But there is not. The way our Constitution is structured, this

Government, you need two-thirds to overcome a certain Presidential

veto, when we do our next resolution with teeth.

So our job here, which this resolution begins, is to ratchet up the

pressure on the President, on those who are still on his side in terms

of this policy until they change. We will be relentless. There will be

resolution after resolution, amendment after amendment, all forcing

this body to do what it has not done in the previous 3 years--debate

and discuss Iraq. And we believe that as that debate continues and as

this process unfolds, just like in the days of Vietnam, the pressure

will mount and the President will find he has no strategy. He will have

to change his strategy, and the vast majority of our troops will be

taken out of harm's way and come home.

So, Madam President, today is the beginning of a historic period,

where for the first time in a while Congress debates foreign policy in

Iraq and Congress tries to do something about foreign policy in Iraq.

To the brave men and women who are defending us today, whom we so

support, thank you for your service, thank you for protecting us. We

will continue to live by what the Constitution has asked us to do,

which is to debate the issues and come up with what is best for our

soldiers, for America, and for the world.

I yield the floor.