Madam President, 5 weeks ago, President Bush stood

before the American people and acknowledged--acknowledged--the lack of

progress in Iraq. He outlined a new military strategy that was devised

after consultation with military commanders, national security leaders,

and Members of Congress from both parties. He told us he had committed

more than 20,000 additional troops to Iraq to clear and secure the city

of Baghdad and to protect its population.

As we meet today, the first of five waves of soldiers are carrying

out this plan on the streets and in the alleys of Baghdad; the second

is preparing to leave. These reinforcements have already given us

reasons for hope. Soon after the President's announcement, U.S. Iraqi

forces began to route key elements of the Mahdi army, the militia's

leader fled his stronghold, and this week U.S. Iraqi forces have

conducted sweeps through once violent Sunni neighborhoods with little

resistance.

It is too early to say whether the surge will achieve its objective,

but General Petraeus and President Bush ask us to give the plan a

chance to work, to support our troops in the field and those on their

way. Until now, we have done that. Today--today--we are being asked to

do something entirely different.

The majority party in the Senate wants to vote on a resolution that

condemns the President's plan and which disagrees with General Petraeus

who said before he left for Iraq that additional troops are an

essential part of achieving our goal. They are doing this 3 weeks after

voting, without dissent, to send General Petraeus on this mission. And

they are doing it in the form of a nonbinding resolution that will have

no practical effect on the conduct of the war.

Americans have a right to demand why the Senate has not yet taken a

clear stand on what most of us believe to be our last best chance at

success. So let us be clear at the outset of this debate about what is

going on today and about what Republicans are fighting for today.

Republicans are fighting for the right of the American people to know

where we stand. If you support the war, say so. If you don't, say so.

But you cannot say you are registering a vote in favor of our troops

unless you pledge to support them with the funds they need to carry out

their mission. Yet this is precisely--precisely--what the Democratic

majority would have us do today.

They demand Republicans cast a vote in favor of a nonsensical

proposition that says we disapprove of the President's plan to deploy

more troops to Iraq, but we support the members of the Armed Forces who

are serving there. A vote in support of the troops that is silent on

the question of funds is an attempt to have it both ways. So

Republicans are asking for an honest and open debate, and we are being

blocked at every turn.

The majority party in the House has a stronger hand in determining

what comes up for a vote. So yesterday they forced a vote on the same

stay-the-course resolution that Democrats are now trying to put before

the Senate. Democrats have been clear about the strategy behind this

resolution. They describe it as a slow bleed, a way of tying the hands

of the Commander in Chief. The House said yesterday that it supports

the troops. Yet its leadership is preparing to deny the reinforcements

that those troops will need in the weeks and months ahead.

The Senate was created to block that kind of dealing, and today it

stops at the doors of this Chamber. Even opponents of the war denounce

the tactics of the Democratic leadership.

In an editorial today, the New York Times, amazingly enough, called

yesterday's House vote a ``clever maneuver to dress up a reduction in

troop

strength as a `support the troops' measure.'' Adding, ``It takes no

courage or creativity,'' said the New York Times, ``for a politician to

express continuing support for the troops and opposition to a vastly

unpopular and unpromising military escalation.''

The Washington Post was rightly appalled in an editorial this morning

by the slow-bleed strategy, calling it ``a crude hamstringing of the

military commanders and their ability to deploy troops.'' The Post

exposed the details of Mr. Murtha's plan to add language to a war-

funding bill that would strangle the President's ability to get

reinforcements to soldiers in the field all under the guise of having

them better prepared.

``Why,'' the Post asks, ``doesn't Mr. Murtha strip the money out of

the appropriations bill? Something he is clearly free to do.'' Good

question. And the astonishing answer comes from Mr. Murtha's own lips.

``What we are saying,'' Congressman Murtha says, ``will be very hard to

find fault with.''

There is no place for this kind of chicanery at a time of war. Even

some of the President's most strident opponents know that. They know

the only vote that truly matters is a vote on whether to fund the

troops. That is the vote House Republicans were denied yesterday. That

is the vote Senate Republicans and a growing number of clear-eyed

observers on both sides of this issue are demanding today. Let those of

us who support the President's plan to win in Iraq say so. Let those

who oppose it also say so.

We will not be forced to vote for a resolution that says we support

the troops but does not ask us to seal that pledge with a promise to

help them carry out their mission in the only way they can, which is by

funding their mission.

Madam President, has my time expired?

Madam President, let me additionally say that Senate

Republicans have been trying to have this debate now for several weeks.

We expected to have it week before last. We insist, however, on having

the debate in the Senate in the way debates are always carried out in

the Senate, in a fair and evenhanded way.

Our good friends on the other side of the aisle initially supported

the Biden proposal, which came out of the Foreign Relations Committee.

When that appeared not to have enough support, they adopted the Warner-

Levin proposal. When that appeared to be inconvenient, they switched

again and now support, I guess, what best can be called the Pelosi-Reid

proposal, which they are attempting to get before the Senate today.

All along the way, for the last few weeks, Senate Republicans have

been consistent in asking for a fair debate, and a fair debate

includes, at the very least, one alternative supported by a majority of

Senate Republicans. The one alternative we settled on was Senator

Gregg's proposal to guarantee that we support funding for the troops.

This fundamental unfairness and unwillingness to allow the Senate to

vote on arguably the most significant issue confronting the troop

surge, which is whether it is going to be funded, is the reason this

stalemate has occurred.

I am optimistic, and I certainly hope that Senate Republicans will

continue to insist on fair treatment in debating what is clearly,

unambiguously, the most important issue confronting the country today.

Madam President, I yield the floor and the remainder of my time.