Madam President, the White House has been telling America

that Democrats are doing the wrong thing by calling for a change of

course in Iraq. They say holding the Iraqi Government accountable is

wrong. They say finding a political solution in Iraq is wrong. They say

redeploying troops out of a civil war is wrong. They have said even

debating a strategy for changing course is dangerous, and many Senate

Republicans have backed that up by blocking several of our attempts to

debate this issue here on the Senate Floor.

The American people want us to debate the war, and they want us to

change the course. Listen to what the President's own Secretary of

Defense Robert Gates said in the last few hours, and I quote:

The President and some of my Republican colleagues have also

attempted to create a false crisis by claiming that Democrats are

putting the troops in danger by not sending the supplemental bill

immediately. But today, the Pentagon acknowledged what Democrats have

long known--that President Bush continues to misstate the reality on

the ground and in Iraq to score political points.

Like the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, the Pentagon now

acknowledges that it can pay for the Iraq war at least through June

with the funds that have already been provided.

I hope the President and our Republican colleagues in Congress will

put these false claims aside so we can get back to working toward a

bipartisan solution.

Yesterday I met with President Bush to express the will of the

American people, senior military officials, and a bipartisan majority

of Congress that we must change course in Iraq. I told President Bush

that, going on to 5 years, more than 3,300 American soldiers lost, tens

of thousands wounded, a third of them gravely wounded, and billions and

billions of dollars depleted from our Treasury, we as a country must

change course in Iraq.

Conditions in Iraq get worse by the day. Now we find ourselves

policing another nation's civil war. We are less secure from the many

threats to our national security than we were when the war began. As

long as we follow the President's path in Iraq, the war is lost. But

there is still a chance to change course and we must change course. No

one wants us to succeed in the Middle East more than I do. But there

must be a change of course. Our brave men and women overseas have

passed every test with flying colors. They have earned our pride and

our praise. More important, they deserve a strategy worthy of their

sacrifice.

The supplemental bill we passed with bipartisan support offers that.

It includes a reasonable and attainable timeline to reduce combat

missions and refocus our efforts on the real threats to our country's

security. It offers a new path, a new direction forward. If we put

politics aside, I believe we can find a way to make America safer and

stronger.