Mr. President, I strongly oppose President Bush's

statements that the Democratic leaders are trying to use the current

emergency supplemental bill to make a political statement. Congress is

acting on its mandate from the American people, who used their votes

last November to register their opposition to the war in Iraq.

The President has repeatedly made it clear that nothing--not the

wishes of the American people, not the advice of military foreign

policy experts, not the concerns of members of both parties--will

discourage him from pursuing a war that has no end in sight and that

has no military solution. With our heroic troops stuck in an Iraqi

civil war, Congress cannot wait for the President to change course. We

must change the course ourselves.

Once again, President Bush is stalling for time as he threatens to

veto a bipartisan bill that could finally change the course in Iraq.

Although the conference report does not go as far or move as quickly

as I would like, it is an important step toward ending the President's

misguided policies in Iraq. It requires the President to begin

redeploying U.S. troops from Iraq, while permitting troops to remain in

Iraq for defined and narrow purposes: To protect U.S. personnel and

facilities, to engage in against al-Qaida

and their affiliates and to train and equip Iraqi forces. The vast

majority of our troops would have to be redeployed, thus bringing to an

end our current involvement in what may be the greatest foreign policy

blunder in American history.

Some of my colleagues may still feel we should defer to the Commander

in Chief. But these arguments disregard our congressional

responsibilities. Congress authorized this war and we have the power

and the responsibility to bring it to a close.

We have a responsibility to end a war that is taking away resources

from our top national security priority--the global fight against al-

Qaida and its affiliates. Let me remind my colleagues that this is

indeed a global fight--focusing so much of our resources on one country

against an enemy that operates around the world is shortsighted and

self-defeating.

I am not suggesting that we leave the Iraqis to their own devices.

There are many serious and troubling political problems in Iraq that

are driving the insurgency and sectarian struggle and they require the

attention of U.S. policymakers. But they will not be solved by an open-

ended, massive military engagement.

Instead, we need a strategic approach to redeployment and a global

strategy to defeat the threats posed by terrorist networks. As long as

the President's Iraq policy goes unchecked, our military will continue

to put their lives on the line unnecessarily, our constituents will

continue to pour billions of their dollars into this war, our military

readiness will continue to erode, and we will be unable to develop a

strategy to truly confront al-Qaida.

If the President vetoes this bill, he will be rejecting the wishes of

the American people and the imperatives of our national security. I

will oppose any efforts to send a weaker bill to the President's desk

and I will continue to speak out on this issue until the voices of the

American people are finally heard in Congress and the White House.