Mr. President, last night, the House of Representatives

passed a new Iraq supplemental. So now it is our turn. We have to take

the next step to pass our version of the bill that will go to

conference. The House has done their job. We now have to do our job.

We all know reaching consensus on a new bill to send to the President

will not be easy. That is what the Republican leader and I were talking

about right here.

Passions run high on this issue--very high. But there is new reason

this week to believe a bipartisan consensus in Iraq is emerging. It is

what the American people want. A recent poll--in fact, it was from a

couple days ago--shows 75 percent of Americans favor benchmarks and 60

percent favor a timetable for reducing combat forces. It is what

President Bush's own military advisers say we need, including General

Petraeus, who has said this war cannot be won militarily. It is what

Democrats have stood for with firm resolve throughout these entire

negotiations.

Now, in the last few days, we have seen our Republican colleagues

move closer to our position. Over the weekend, the House majority

leader, John Boehner, said:

That is a timetable. The President has objected to our timetables. He

vetoed our bill with timetables in it. The Republican leader in the

House--the No. 1 Republican in the House--has told the President if

things are not OK in September or October, something else has to

happen. That is a timetable.

And days ago, Leader McConnell echoed those sentiments as well.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday a broad coalition of Republican House Members

expressed their dissent directly to the President. They went to the

White House, spent an hour and 15 minutes with the President. One of

them, Tom Davis of Virginia, called it their chance to confront a

President who, as he put it, is in a bubble.

In the spirit of bipartisanship, I am inclined to agree with that

assessment. The President is in a bubble. He is isolated.

Every day, the ranks of dissatisfied Republicans grow. But I wish my

Republican colleagues--who now agree that President Bush's open-ended

commitment has failed--would put some teeth behind their views.

We have courageous American troops in harm's way every day. We lost

another Nevadan this week. There may be a State that has lost more than

the Presiding Officer's State, but I do not know what State that would

be. The State of Ohio has suffered significantly in the loss of life.

It is time for action. It is time to change course. It is long past

due.

But I would say the shift we are hearing from the Republicans, even

though a little bit quiet, each day is getting louder and louder and

louder. It is a welcome shift, and it is very encouraging. It gives me

hope that in the coming days, weeks, and months we will be able to work

together with good faith and bipartisanship to give our troops and all

Americans the new course they demand and deserve and the opportunity

for our troops to come home.

We are going to do our very best to come up with something we can

pass here in the Senate, send to the House, and confer, have a

conference. We will do that to the very best of our ability. But, as I

indicated earlier, it is not going to be easy.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.