Mr. President, I will try to be brief and to the

point, if I cannot be eloquent. I want to talk about the Iraq

situation.

A number of Senators have spoken about that this morning. They are

looking at the progress that is taking place with the surge. I had

great question about the surge at the outset. I questioned whether this

was the right route to go. Yet I have to say my concerns were proven

wrong.

Look at the numbers: U.S. deaths are down more than 50 percent since

June. Iraqi deaths are down more than 50 percent since August.

Sectarian violence is down dramatically. Areas of Baghdad are opening.

October saw the fewest roadside bomb instances since September of 2005.

Mortar rocket attacks are at their lowest level since February 2006.

Nobody would say it is over, we have won, but they would say these are

very positive events that have taken place.

The area we have to emphasize now is the political solution to

capture the moment of getting more stability on the ground in Iraq. For

some time Senator Biden and I have pushed a federalism approach that

this body endorsed by 70 votes. Now is the time for us to push much

more aggressively on this political solution. We are seeing this

already taking hold in the Kurdish region which has had a head start.

Under Saddam Hussein, the Kurds were protected by our air power in the

north. They have stabilized a government and have been operating

basically that region. We now have Anbar stabilizing, the Anbar

awakening. But they are not particularly interested in the federalism

solution because they don't have oil. So what we have to have take

place at the national level in Iraq is an oil law that distributes oil

on a per capita basis around the country, not in regions, so federalism

roots can take hold--not one Iraq but several regions and not

necessarily on a sectarian basis.

Several Iraqis I have met with are saying they believe in federalism.

They think it is the route to go. But they say: Don't say we are a

Sunni region here or a Shia region there. These are going to be

multisect regions so we can get together on a regional basis and not on

a division basis around the country. This is a very promising route to

go, but we need a political surge to take place in Iraq. We need to put

emphasis on a political surge to capitalize on the stabilizing

situation that is taking place on the ground.

We need a diplomatic surge. We need to push the Iraqis to get oil

laws and debaathification taking place on a national level. We should

prioritize local and provincial elections and encourage Iraq to devolve

power from Baghdad. We should provide additional humanitarian

assistance for those Iraqis who fled sectarian violence and relocated

to other areas, or they are coming back. Some people are not coming

back to areas because there is no housing left; it got blown up in all

the violence that took place. Instead of pretending that nothing has

changed, our debate needs to reflect the reality on the ground, that

the security situation is much better, that we have a real moment here.

The reality is that security has improved. The reality is that

centralizing power in Baghdad is not the route to go. Creating federal

regions provides a chance for that success to be captured and moved

forward.

I question what came out of the Joint Economic Committee on the

funding of the war. I am ranking Republican on that committee. That was

not a committee report. I believe there are significant problems with

how that funding level was arrived at. I don't think that was accurate.

I don't think it was a positive way to move forward. Instead, now is

the time to say: OK, let's capitalize on the surge. Let's go on a

bipartisan basis with Senator Biden and myself on federalism. Let's

push that to capture this, and then we as America can declare victory--

not a Republican victory, not a Bush victory, but we as Americans can

say it is now stabilized and we can start to pull our troops back. That

is the talk that is penetrating now, and it is the talk we need to have

a lot more of.

Iraqi President Talibani endorses federalism as a political solution.

The Kurds have announced they will convene a federalism conference.

Some Iraqi Shia groups are openly discussing the creation of a region

that would be a federalism model. The Sunnis do not particularly want

to because they do not have oil, so we have to get that oil devolved.

I think there is a real route forward for us to all be able to say,

soon, we are making progress, it is sustainable, and we are handing it

off to the Iraqis.

Mr. President, I thank you for your indulgence.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.