Madam President, I had come to the Senate floor to talk

about an issue that is very important to all of us, particularly

Medicare recipients in this country. But first I have to express some

disappointment, frankly, and some surprise about the discussion that

has gone on here in the first 30 minutes criticizing the President on

everything that is happening overseas, acting as if we are not in

support of what is happening there.

I am very surprised and, frankly, disappointed. All they talk about

is what the President has done. We voted here on this floor to do this

job in the Middle East. That is what we are seeking to do, and that is

what our great service people are doing for us over there.

The idea behind conducting Operation Iraqi Freedom was to free 25

million Iraqis from the Saddam Hussein regime. That is why we are

there: to defend the will of the international community, to remove the

threat of terrorism that happened here on September 11, and to change

the dynamics in the Middle East. That is what we are seeking to do, and

that is what we are trying to carry on, and it is an admirable effort.

Madam President, 211 Members of Congress have visited Iraq and

witnessed firsthand some of the extraordinary efforts of the coalition

forces and Iraqis. I have been to Iraq. I am impressed with what they

are doing. For us to simply criticize everything that is happening

there aimed at the election in 2004 is a great disappointment to me.

Despite the terrorist attacks and the tough events that have

happened, public opinion has found 56 percent of Iraqis believe things

are better than they were; 71 percent believe a year from now they will

be better than they are now. Again, having been there, I agree with

that assessment. I have been there traveling around with the military,

with all the little kids waving and saying hello. I have seen the

schools and hospitals that have been fixed up. Of course, there is a

real problem with terrorism, there is no question about it.

The defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime is the second major victory in

the war on terrorism. We need to continue.

I hope we give the kind of support that is necessary.