Mr. President, last week marked the 5-year anniversary

of President Bush's signing the Congressional resolution that

authorized him to use military force in Iraq. That resolution has

proved to be a disaster for our country, opening the door to a war that

has undermined our top national security priority, the fight against

al-Qaida and its affiliates.

More than 5 years after the authorization of war, America is mired in

a conflict that continues to have no end in sight. Nearly 4,000 of our

soldiers have died and more than 27,000 have been wounded. Hundreds of

thousands of Iraqi civilians have been killed, if not more, and at

least 4.5 million have been displaced from their homes. The region is

more unstable, and our credibility throughout the international

community has been significantly damaged.

We have spent over a half trillion dollars and stretched our military

to the breaking point. Who knows how many more billions will be spent

and how many brave Americans will die while the President pursues a

military solution to problems that can only be solved by a political

settlement in Iraq.

At the same time, al-Qaida has reconstituted itself along the

Afghanistan-Pakistan border region and has developed new affiliates

around the globe. Al-Qaida has been strengthened, not weakened, since

we authorized military action against, and then want to war in, Iraq.

Indeed, this senseless war has made us more vulnerable, not more

secure. Yet it continues endlessly with only a small token drawdown of

forces expected in the coming months, and no timeline from this

administration as to when more troops will come home.

The American people know this war does not make sense. They expect us

to do everything in our power to end it. Now that does not mean

neglecting domestic priorities, and there are plenty of those to

address, but it does mean we cannot, in good conscience, simply put

Iraq on the back burner. We cannot simply tell ourselves and our

constituents we have done everything we could. Finding the votes to end

this war is not an easy task, but for the sake of the country, we must

keep trying. I, for one, am not prepared to say, in late October, with

weeks to go before we adjourn for the year, that Iraq can wait until we

come back in 2008. Believe me, the administration and its supporters

would like nothing better than to change the subject from Iraq. Every

time we insist on debates and votes on Iraq, they complain loudly that

we are taking time away from the country's true priorities. But as we

were reminded last November, however, ending the disastrous Iraq war is

one of the American people's top priorities. It may well be their top

priority, and we owe it to them to make it our top priority as well.

While the administration continues to refuse to acknowledge that we

have severely strayed off course, the war drags on and on, and more

brave American soldiers are being wounded or killed. But it is not only

the President and his administration that is at fault; many of my

colleagues here in Congress have expressed concerns about the war but

refuse to take real action to end it. They have prevented Congress from

acting to secure our country and restore our global leadership.

I will not stand idly by while this mistaken war continues. I will

continue working to end this war and bring our troops home. I will

continue looking in the days and weeks ahead for opportunities to

debate and vote on ending the war, this year, and, if necessary, next

as well.

My colleagues may complain, they may be inconvenienced, they may

prefer to focus on other matters. But this Congress has no greater

priority than making right the mistake it made more than 5 years ago

when it authorized this misguided war.

I do not want to have to come to the floor again in a year to mark

another anniversary of the war's authorization, and to again implore my

colleagues to act. I do not want the American people to lose faith in

their elected leaders for pursuing a war they rightly oppose. I do not

want more American troops to be killed for a war that does not serve

our national security interests.