Mr. President, I have sought recognition to oppose

cloture on the pending motion to proceed on the issue of how to deal

with the Iraqi problem.

As I look at this issue, it is one of enormous magnitude, and it

ought not to be subject to shortcuts in the debate of the Senate. We

pride ourselves on being the world's greatest deliberative body, and

now is the time to show it. But what is happening on this motion for

cloture and what is happening behind the scenes on negotiations is an

effort to short-circuit debate on this matter of great importance,

great magnitude. It is the issue which is engulfing the work of this

body, the work of the House, and, really, all of Washington, and many

of the eyes of the world are focused on this issue. There is no oxygen

left in this town except on what to do on Iraq.

I suggest that this is not the kind of an issue where we ought to be

short-circuited. There ought to be a full opportunity to debate this

issue and all of its ramifications. What is happening behind the scenes

is an effort to limit the number of resolutions and/or bills which may

be offered as alternatives as to what the course of the United States

ought to be on this very important subject.

Although it is arcane and esoteric and not subject to being

understood, what is happening, again, behind the scenes, is the threat

by the majority to fill up the tree, and that means when a bill is on

the floor, if there is a first-degree amendment and a second-degree

amendment, both of which are technical in nature and both of which may

be offered by the majority leader because of the rule of priority of

recognition, nobody else can offer an amendment.

Now, the countersuggestion has been made that there would be two

amendments by the Republicans. That is down from five amendments, and

it may be that even five are insufficient. As we debate this issue,

other ideas may occur as to what ought to happen. But we are dealing

with very complex issues.

On this state of the record, I cannot support an additional

allocation of 21,500 troops because it is my judgment that would not be

material or helpful in what is going on at the present time. This comes

against the backdrop of extensive hearings in the Armed Services

Committee and Foreign Relations Committee, and in the context of the

military having given many estimates with many of those in key command

positions saying that no more troops are necessary. This comes with the

Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki saying a variety of things but at some

times saying he doesn't want any more troops.

This debate ought to be taking up alternative proposals, and the one

which is the most attractive to this Senator on this state of the

record and has been endorsed by a number of the military is to give

notice to the Iraqis that at some point in the future, with the exact

time to be determined by the military experts, perhaps 6 months or

perhaps some other point, that the Iraqis will be called upon to take

over Baghdad, the security of Baghdad, to keep U.S. troops out of the

line of fire between the Sunnis and the Shias, and that our current

force would remain in Iraq to guard the infrastructure, to guard the

oil wells, to give advice and to give training but not to undertake the

major responsibility.

The obvious answer ultimately has to be a diplomatic solution, and as

long as the Iraqis know that we are going to send in additional troops,

that we are going to take over the responsibilities which they should

be undertaking, they are going to sit back and let us do it. It is a

matter of human nature. If Uncle Sam will do it, why should the Iraqis

do it? But if we put them on notice that it is going to be their

responsibility at a given time, then that puts the obligation on them.

In the President's State of the Union speech, he was explicit that

the Iraqis had to do two things: No. 1, end the sectarian violence,

and, no. 2, secure Baghdad. And on this state of the record there is no

showing that the Iraqis are capable of doing either.

It is my hope, as we listen to the Senators who have been engaged in

these hearings, who have studied the matter in some detail, and as we

explore the alternatives, explore the alternative resolution of putting

benchmarks that the Iraqis have to meet, when we explore the

alternative of limiting funding--which I think there is unanimity we

cannot limit funding at a time when American troops will be put in

harm's way--this is the time for the Senate to assert congressional

responsibility, which we have.

When the President says repeatedly he is the ``decider,'' I say

respectfully to the President that is a shared responsibility. Under

the Constitution, the Congress has the authority to decide, to maintain

armies. The Constitution specifically limited appropriations to 2

years.

However, if we are to assert that responsibility and that support, it

seems to me we have to do it in a way which does not limit our debate.

Right now, we are under a tremendous time pressure, with only an hour

and a half to debate this important matter, and Senators are looking

for more time. That is a very poor way for this Senate to approach this

very important subject.

I yield back the remainder of my time.