Madam President, I hope the Senate will be allowed to

debate our policy in Iraq by proceeding to this legislation this

afternoon. Iraq is the single most important policy issue facing our

country. It was a major issue in the November elections last fall. The

American people have strong opinions about what is happening in Iraq.

They want their elected officials to debate this issue, and we should

do it. The debate should go forward. A filibuster is out of place on

war and peace issues, on something of this magnitude. The debate is not

about whether we want the United States to act to maximize chances of

success in Iraq. We all want to maximize chances of success in Iraq. We

all want to see a stable Iraq which enhances our own national security.

But the President's course of action, which he has been on for 3\1/2\

years and which he has now proposed to continue on to deepen our

involvement in Iraq, does not enhance our security. It does not

maximize chances of success in Iraq.

The debate is about the best way to maximize chances of success in

Iraq. Is the new strategy of the President, which puts over 21,000 more

American troops in the middle of an Iraqi civil war, the best way to

bring that about? That is what this debate is about. There actually

seems to be an agreement among most observers that an Iraqi political

settlement is the key to ending the violence in Iraq. The difference of

opinion exists on whether Iraqi politicians need breathing space, as

President Bush has said, to reach required political compromises or

whether, as many of us believe, Iraqi politicians need to be pressured

to make those compromises and that the addition of 21,000 more troops

doesn't make a political compromise more likely; it just gets us in

deeper in the middle of a civil conflict.

The bill we are hoping to proceed to today incorporates the modified

Warner resolution verbatim, except for a minor change in order to make

it a bill instead of a resolution. The reason for making it a bill

instead of a resolution is simply to make it more amendable. Unlike a

resolution, which is clumsy to amend, there is no intent to put this

modified Warner language in the form of a bill for any other purpose.

As a matter of fact, the majority leader has asked for unanimous

consent to treat a resolution with Senator Warner's language as

amendable, as though it were a bill, to achieve the goal we are trying

to achieve. This unanimous consent was objected to by the Republican

leader.

The majority leader, Senator Reid, has also told Senator McConnell

that we are more than willing to transform this bill into a resolution

prior to final passage, if we can get to final passage, if a filibuster

does not thwart our getting to final passage.

What does the modified Warner language do which is incorporated into

this bill? It makes it clear the Congress disagrees with the

President's plan to increase force levels and urges the President

instead to consider all options and alternatives. This bill makes it

clear that we will fund troops in the field. There is no difference

between these two documents in that regard. Both our bill and the

McCain resolution make it clear we want to fund the troops in the

field. Our bill makes it clear that the responsibility for Iraq's

internal security and for halting sectarian violence must rest

primarily with the Government of Iraq and Iraqi security forces. It

makes it clear that Iraqis must reach political settlements in order to

achieve reconciliation, and the failure of the Iraqis to reach such

settlements to create a truly unified government contributes to

increasing violence in Iraq.

Our bill makes it clear that the primary objective of the overall

United States strategy in Iraq should be to encourage Iraqi leaders to

make political compromises that will foster reconciliation and

establish a true unity government, ultimately leading to improvements

in the security situation.

Adding American troops does not increase the probability of achieving

the primary objective. Listen to what GEN John Abizaid said when he

testified to Congress in November of last year:

Finally, General Abizaid said:

Besides making it less likely that the Iraqis will take more

responsibility for their own future, adding more American troops is an

attempt to reach a military solution to an inherently political

problem.

The Prime Minister of Iraq himself stated last November:

Adding more American troops does not pressure Iraqi politicians to be

Iraqi leaders and to make the political compromises essential for a

political solution; it only allows them to continue what in the words

of the National Intelligence Estimate is the ``current winner-take-all

attitude and sectarian animosities infecting the political scene.''

The administration says this bill emboldens the enemy. Congressional

debate over Iraq policy doesn't embolden the enemy. The enemy is

already emboldened.

What emboldens the enemy is the almost 4 years' presence of Western

troops in the middle of a Muslim country's capital, which causes over

70 percent of the residents of that country to oppose our presence.

What emboldens the enemy is the open-ended presence of Western

troops, which serves as a magnet for extremists and gives a propaganda

club to our enemies.

What emboldens the enemy is invading Iraq without the support of the

international community.

What emboldens the enemy is lawlessness and looters ransacking public

buildings and institutions in Iraq.

What emboldens the enemy is invading Iraq without a plan for the

aftermath of the invasion.

What emboldens the enemy is increasing the number of American troops,

which results in Iraqis taking less responsibility for providing

security for all the citizens of Iraq.

What emboldens the enemy is the creation of Green Zones protecting

Iraqi political leaders, in which they pursue a winner-take-all

political approach.

Madam President, how much time do I have?

Madam President, we owe our troops everything. We owe them

the best equipment we can provide. We owe them the best training. We

owe their families the best support we can give them.

We also owe them our best thinking. I think it is an insult to the

intelligence of our troops to suggest that debating the wisdom of

deepening the military presence in Iraq somehow or other emboldens the

enemy. Our troops depend upon us to give them what they deserve:

support. And part of that support in a democracy is debating the policy

which not only brought them there but which keeps them there and, if

many of us are correct, will keep them there longer and with greater

casualties. The best way to change course in Iraq is to adopt the

modified Warner language.

It has been said that this is not as strong as withholding funds. We

don't want to withhold funds from troops in the field. We want to

change this policy. If you want to change the policy this

administration is following, which relies on a military solution, a

deepening military presence in Iraq, we hope you will vote for cloture

on this bill.

I yield the floor.