Madam President, the Republican side of the aisle is

ready for this debate. We are anxious to have it. There are different

voices. We just heard from a couple of my distinguished colleagues who

have a different view of this debate than I. What we are unified upon

is a process that guarantees fairness for the consideration of what is

clearly and unambiguously the most significant issue in the country at

this moment.

The majority leader and I have been working in good faith on an

agreement that provides for a structured debate on the various

proposals and votes on each. The other side said we turned down three

compromises but, frankly, that is not the full story.

The majority leader said he would agree to a consent that would allow

votes on the McCain proposal and the Warner proposal. He also mentioned

that he would agree to a 60-vote threshold on each of those. All we are

asking for is the same agreement on

the Gregg resolution. Now, in fact, there was demand among Republican

Senators for additional alternatives. We were able to pair those down

to two.

Why 60 votes? Let me remind all of our colleagues--and certainly the

distinguished senior Senator from Virginia doesn't need to be reminded

of that, having been here 29 years--that one single Senator can insist

that a matter be subject to 60 votes. One single Senator. There are

many Senators on this side of the aisle who would insist upon that. So

it is a statement of the obvious that matters of consequence in the

Senate over the years have developed in the following way: They are all

subject to a 60-vote threshold. To suggest that is anything

extraordinary really defies our experience here. It is ordinary, not

extraordinary, for matters of great controversy--and even, in this day

and age, matters of only a little controversy--to be subject to a 60-

vote threshold.

Our good friends on the other side of the aisle--and this was an

issue the Senator from Virginia was very much involved with in the last

Congress--were seeking to establish in one of the last areas where 60

votes was not customarily required--the confirmation of judges--that we

should start requiring it there as well. That would leave virtually

nothing the Senate would consider, except the budget resolution, not

being subject to a 60-vote threshold.

So what we are asking for on the Republican side is not at all

extraordinary. The term ``filibuster'' has become a pejorative term for

suggesting that one wants to stop something. Let me repeat, as I have

said to the distinguished majority leader, to the Senator from

Virginia, and to the Senator from Nebraska, we are not trying to stop

this debate. We are trying to structure it in a way that is fair to the

competing voices in the Republican conference who will band together

shortly in a significant enough number to insist on a fair process.

So that is what this is about, Madam President. I have indicated to

the Democratic leader--and I certainly wouldn't want to surprise him--

that I intended to propound a unanimous consent request that would be

acceptable to our side, and I will be happy to do that now, having

given notice to the majority leader that I would do so.

But before doing that, let me say one more time, there is not a

single Republican Senator seeking to avoid this debate. We have just

heard from two voices that are in the minority in our conference--the

Senator from Virginia and the Senator from Nebraska--who don't share my

view, who nevertheless will vote against cloture shortly to make the

point that this Republican minority insists upon fair treatment on this

important debate.

Therefore, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time

determined by the majority leader, after consultation with the

Republican leader, the Senate proceed en bloc to the following

concurrent resolutions under the following agreement:

S. Con. Res. 7, the Warner resolution which is to be discharged from

the Foreign Relations Committee; McCain-Lieberman-Graham, regarding

benchmarks; Gregg related to funding.

I further ask unanimous consent that there be a total of 10 hours--

and I will be happy to pick whatever number might be agreeable to the

majority leader--of debate equally divided between the two leaders or

their designees; provided further, that no amendments be in order to

any of the measures; further, that after the use or yielding back of

time, the Senate proceed to three consecutive votes on the adoption of

the concurrent resolutions in the following order, with no intervening

action or debate: first, McCain-Lieberman-Graham; second, Gregg; third,

S. Con. Res. 7. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that any resolution

that does not achieve 60 votes in the affirmative, the vote on adoption

be vitiated and the concurrent resolution be returned to its previous

status.