Mr. President, I rise in support of S. Res. 636 that

Senator Lieberman will be trying to introduce tomorrow. It is a

resolution of the Senate, and he will be trying to introduce it

tomorrow. I am going to speak on it tonight. I am a coauthor of it. It

speaks about the phenomenal success of the surge, of troops into Iraq.

But it is more than just a surge of 30,000 troops. It has been a surge

on many fronts: political, economic, and militarily. The resolution

would be a statement by the Senate recognizing that the surge has

worked, that those who executed the strategy are recognized for being

the great leaders they are, it is a compliment to our troops, and it is

also a recognition that the Iraqi people have stepped to the plate and

changed the tides that existed in their country of extremism and Iraq

now is becoming a stable government, a country where people are working

out their differences through the rule of law and representative

democracy, and al-Qaida has been delivered a dramatic blow.

To put this in perspective, at the end of 2006, it was clear the old

strategy was not working, that the troops we had in Iraq were not being

used in a way to counter the insurgency and were not enough in number.

All this came to a head in late 2006 when Senator McCain, myself, and

Senator Lieberman, among others, were arguing for a change in strategy.

We had, I think, seven visits to Iraq; at the time about four. During

our visits--Senator McCain, myself, and Senator Lieberman--every time

we went, it was worse than the time before, up until the surge became

the new strategy. The sergeants, the colonels, and captains were very

blunt with us, saying this was not working. It was clear to us we did

not have the right number of troops or the right strategy. In January

of 2007, President Bush, much to his credit, announced a new strategy,

an infusion of, I think, 30,000 new combat brigades into Iraq to bring

about security.

It has always been our belief--Senator McCain, myself, and Senator

Lieberman--that without security, it is hard to have a representative

democracy. It is one thing to talk about political compromise and the

difficulty of talk radio and MoveOn.Org. But it is another thing to

talk about political compromise when your family is being murdered. It

is very hard to administer the rule of law when the judges and the

prospective participants in the trial are under siege and under attack.

So without better security, there was no hope.

I have always believed that a security environment is required before

you can have political compromise, economic progress, or any

forgiveness. The economic progress in Iraq is pretty stunning: 5

percent growth. The oil revenues have almost doubled. Oil production

has almost doubled. The economy is doing very well in Iraq compared to

a year ago. The availability of energy and power is dramatically up. So

the everyday life of the Iraqi people is still a struggle and difficult

but far better than it was a year ago. There are a lot of people

purchasing refrigerators and televisions and other electronic devices.

The availability of power is at an all-time high. But demand is also at

an all-time high.

Economically, inflation is down and the Iraqis have a surplus. People

say: Well, should they pay us back? I would like to get some of our

money back. They are certainly paying more. They are paying for all

major reconstruction projects now, and they are paying for the

operation of their army, for the most part.

But the best way to pay us back as a nation is for Iraq to be a place

that embraces democracy, rejects al-Qaida, would be a buffer to Iranian

ambitions, would be a place where a woman would have a say about her

child. All that, to me, is priceless. For Iraq to go from a Saddam

Hussein dictatorship to a representative government where Sunnis,

Shias, and Kurds live in peace with each other, at peace with their

neighbors is a major sea change in the overall war on terror and is a

priceless event as far as I am concerned.

To have an Arab nation in the heart of the Mideast, a Muslim nation

that rejected al-Qaida, is exactly what we need more of. The Iraqi

people need to be acknowledged as to their sacrifice. What they have

done has been tough. Their casualty rate has been about three times

ours. The political reconciliation progress is moving forward now in

Iraq. Fifteen of the 18 political benchmarks have been met by the Iraqi

Government. The debaathification law was passed. That allows members of

the Baath Party under Saddam to come back into the Government and get

some of their old jobs back.

The amnesty law was passed. That means Sunni insurgents who were

captured a year or 2 years ago as part of the insurgency to topple the

Government in Baghdad will be let go and go back home and become part

of the new Iraq.

Forgiveness is required before you have reconciliation. You see

throughout Iraq a level of forgiveness that I think is encouraging. For

the Shias and the Kurds to pass the amnesty law, telling their Sunni

brothers and sisters: Let's start over, is a major step forward. For

the Sunnis to embrace new elections after they boycotted them in 2005

is a recognition by the Sunni factions in Iraq that democracy is the

way to go: Go to Baghdad through representation, not through violence.

The Kurds have created stability in the north, and they are working

with their partners in the south and in the west with the Sunnis and

the Shias.

Maliki has stepped to the plate. I was not so excited about his

leadership a year ago, but he has turned things around. The Shia-

dominated Government in Iraq is taking on Shia militias in the southern

part of Iraq, in the Basra area, that have been supported by Iranian

special groups. The knock on Maliki was: Well, he is a sectarian

leader. The fact that he would take on al-Sadr and Shia-backed militias

from Iran--Iranian-backed militias in his own country--is a sign that

he does not want to be dominated by Iranian theology.

So I am hopeful more so now than ever that Iraq has turned a corner

economically, politically, and militarily. Their army is 100,000

stronger than it was before the surge, and they performed well after a

slow start in the southern part of Iraq against the Shia militias, and

they are fighting very well in Mosul.

One of the most stunning events and turnarounds, I believe, has been

the recent handing over of Anbar Province back to the Iraqis. About 2

years ago, Anbar was declared lost. It was an al-Qaida stronghold--the

Sunni part of Iraq--where al-Qaida was going up and down the streets of

Ramadi holding a parade. And it was a very tough situation in Fallujah.

What happened was a combination of events. The Sunni Iraqis in that

part of Iraq, in Anbar, tasted al-Qaida life and did not like it. They

joined with the coalition forces and, with the addition of more troops,

made a strong stand against al-Qaida. About a week ago, Anbar was

turned back over to the Iraqis, and al-Qaida has been delivered a very

punishing blow. They are not yet completely defeated, but structurally

they are in disarray, and you see the message traffic among al-Qaida

operatives that Iraq has been a nightmare for them, and it has turned

out to be their Vietnam. At the end of the day, anything that will

diminish al-Qaida is good for us. There is no more diminishing event

when it comes to al-Qaida than to have fellow Sunni Muslims turn on

them.

I am proud of the Iraqi people. They need to do more. I think they

will. The surge has worked beyond my expectation--not just militarily.

Politically and economically the surge has worked, and we are on the

road now to what I would say is victory in Iraq.

People ask me: What is winning? Winning is being able to leave Iraq

and have behind an ally in the overall war on terror. Winning would be

having a partner in the heart of the Arab world, the Iraqi Government,

that will reject al-Qaida and deny al-Qaida a safe haven or a foothold.

Winning would be having a Shia-led government that will stand up to

Iran, be a good neighbor but not allow Iran to become stronger. Winning

would be a place in the heart of the Middle East where a woman would

have a say about her children through democracy. Winning would be the

rule of law replacing the rule of gun. All of that makes us safer. The

consequences of losing in Iraq would be enormous and would have been

enormous to our national security interests. Al-Qaida would have

claimed victory over the United States. Iran would be dominating the

southern part of Iraq. The sectarian violence that was widespread, in

my view, would have spread throughout the region. There would have been

Sunni-Shia battles throughout the Middle East and Turkey, and the Kurds

would have had a real problem among themselves. So a failed state in

Iraq would have been a nightmare for our security interests. Winning in

Iraq means a stable government aligned with us that rejects al-Qaida,

and means a buffer to Iranian ambitions; a nation that accepts

democracy and would be a peaceful partner to its neighbors. That is a

major victory in the war on terror because it was a place where al-

Qaida was defeated by Muslims.

This resolution in great detail lays out what happened over the last

year and a half regarding the surge. It is a statement by the Congress

acknowledging success on the battlefield and in other areas. I hope

this is one area where Republicans and Democrats can come together and

recognize the great success of our troops and acknowledge the Iraqi

people themselves looked chaos in the eye and turned it away. I know it

has been difficult for this country; we spent a lot of money and lost a

lot of lives. But this war we are involved in is not a place, it is not

about taking your eye off the ball; it is about fighting the enemy

wherever the enemy goes. I would argue that the world is better off

without Saddam Hussein being in power. The big mistake we made after

the fall of Baghdad is not having enough troops and letting the

situation get out of hand. I don't believe it was a mistake at all to

go after Saddam's regime after 17 U.N. resolutions were ignored. So I

think the world is much better off without Saddam Hussein being in

power.

I would argue we are now on the road to victory in Iraq where we are

going to have a stable, functioning, representative government to

replace a dictatorship--that will be our ally. This has come about with

a lot of sacrifice on behalf of the men and women in uniform, their

civilian counterparts, and Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus have

been great teammates over in Iraq. Here we are--a year ago tomorrow

General Petraeus testified before the Congress. I wish to let him and

all of those under his command, as well as Ambassador Crocker and all

of those civilians who have been helping him, know that they have done

an enormous good for the world, that they have protected our country

from what I thought would have been a humiliating defeat. They have

prevented that defeat. They have turned things around so that if we

have the right exit strategy now, we are going to secure a major

victory on the war on terror. Senator McCain: Hats off to him. He has

always been about winning. We are coming home, but we are going to come

home winners, with honor, and a more secure America because of what has

happened in Iraq in the last year and a half due to the surge.

I hope and pray we can have a vote on this resolution. It would be a

good thing for the Senate to do. Whether you agree with us going into

Iraq, that is an honest, genuine debate. Once there, we couldn't lose.

We were about to lose. Thank God the surge was implemented, and more

than anything else, thank God for good leadership, brave young men and

women representing our Nation who took the fight to the enemy, and God

bless the Iraqi people. I wish them nothing but the best in the future.

I do believe the best days lie ahead for the Iraqi people, and that 20

years from now, long after many of us are gone, here in the Senate we

will look back on this period and understand what was at stake better

than we do today. We will be looking at an Iraq that is part of the

solution, not the problem, in the Mideast. History will say that the

surge was a monumental event in the course of the war on terror, that

the change in strategy was necessary work. I think militarily they will

be studying this Petraeus plan for decades to come, and economically

and politically, the courage that has been shown by the Iraqi people to

step to the plate should be acknowledged by all of us.

At the end of the day, if we had continued with the old strategy, I

think we would have lost. Iraq would have been a failed state and it

would have been a mighty blow to this country and the overall war on

terror. Now I think we can say with confidence we have turned a corner.

Nothing is irreversible. However, I think the gains made on the

political, economic, and military front are going to be hard to roll

back if we will stay the course and end this fight. We are very close

now to having our troops come home in a way that will make us all

safer. I have always believed this one thing about Iraq: Our national

security interests in history will judge us not by the date we left

Iraq but by what we left behind. I think we are very close to being

able to say in the coming months that we are going to leave behind a

new nation that is part of the solution, not the problem; a place where

Muslims said no to al-Qaida; a place where different groups chose the

rule of law over the rule of gun; a place where the woman can finally

have a say about her child and her children's future in the heart of

the Mideast; and that truly makes us all safer.

I do hope Senator Lieberman will be allowed to introduce his

resolution and we will have a vote on that.

With that, I yield the floor.