Mr. President, I come before the body today to let my

colleagues know I intend to vote for cloture on the single and simple

resolution that will be before this body tomorrow afternoon.

When one looks at the content of what is included in this resolution,

it is very simple. In its simplest terms, it says, firsts and foremost,

we support our troops. We support our troops. Who in this body would

disagree with that statement?

Secondly, it makes another statement, another important but very

simple statement, and that is that we disagree with the President's

plan to add an additional 21,500 troops into Iraq. We disagree with the

President's plan.

That is a simple resolution. We should be able to bring that

resolution to this floor. We should be able to have it debated. And we

should be able to have an up-or-down vote on that resolution.

I wish it were otherwise. I wish that, in fact, we were debating the

various resolutions that have been suggested that we debate on this

floor by the majority leader in the last week, where he has offered the

minority leader on the Republican side the opportunity to come in and

debate the Warner resolution, the McCain-Lieberman resolution, as well

as this resolution, and a number of different configurations which have

been offered to the minority party.

But the reality today is this Chamber, through the minority party,

wants to stop a vote on any resolution relating to Iraq. They simply

want to stop a vote. What we need to do as a Chamber, in my view, is to

move forward with the deliberation of the great Senators who are a part

of this Senate and have a robust debate on Iraq that sets forth the

different alternatives that have been presented and come to some kind

of conclusion that gives direction to America and to this country on

how we ought to move forward in Iraq.

I wish we were here in part debating the Warner-Levin resolution

because when you think about the content of the Warner-Levin

resolution, in that resolution you also find what I believe is the best

of what we have to offer. You have a thoughtful proposal that says,

yes, we disagree with the President, but we also have a new direction

in which we believe we ought to march forward in Iraq. That bipartisan

resolution, that was largely drafted by Senator Warner and Senator

Nelson and Senator Collins, of which I am a cosponsor, is a way

forward. It is a way to describe a new direction for us as we move

forward in Iraq.

I also wish we were here today and tomorrow, and even into next week,

debating the resolution which has been brought forward by my dear

friends, Senator Lieberman and Senator McCain. They have a different

point of view than other Members of this body. They have a different

point of view than Senator Warner and I do with respect to how we ought

to move forward in Iraq. But, nonetheless, they are people of good

faith who have a point of view that ought to be debated in this body,

and we ought to have a vote on it.

Unfortunately, the procedural mechanisms which have been put forward

by the minority party will keep us from actually debating that

particular resolution and having a debate and a vote on that

resolution.

I believe the ultimate goal we all have in this Chamber is we want to

have peace in Iraq, and we want to have a peaceful Middle East. But I

also believe that unless we are able to find some way of working

together in a bipartisan manner, that key ingredient of how we find a

peaceful avenue in Iraq and in the Middle East is going to elude us.

For sure, today is simply one of the opening chapters of the great

debate we will have in this Chamber in the weeks and months, perhaps

even in the years, ahead with respect to how we move forward in Iraq

and how we move forward in the Middle East. Without a sense of

bipartisanship, we will not be able to find that unity which is an

essential ingredient for us to be able to move forward.

It dismays me we have not been able to find the bipartisanship to get

us to the 60-vote threshold so we can move forward and have a robust

debate on this issue that will be before the body tomorrow, as well as

other issues and resolutions that would be brought forward by my

colleagues.

As I speak at this time, the House of Representatives--just right

down the hallway from where I stand right now--is about ready to begin

a vote--a vote--on this very simple resolution. And again, its

simplicity defies any logic as to why we would not want to vote on it

in the Senate. It is very simple: We support our troops, and we

disagree with the President's proposed escalation of troops by 21,500.

It is right that we are here this afternoon and into Saturday

debating the vote on that simple resolution. That resolution addresses

the most critical and important issue before our Nation today. I deeply

regret the Senate has been prevented from voting on a similar

resolution, and that is why I will vote for cloture on this resolution

tomorrow. I believe the Senate has an obligation--it has an

obligation--to debate and to vote on the issue that is most important

to America today.

For me, my constituents in Colorado know where I stand. I am a

cosponsor of the bipartisan resolution which Senator Warner and Senator

Nelson and Senator Collins and others have worked on for some time.

That resolution states in clear terms that the Senate disagrees with

the President's plan to send more troops to Iraq. And, at the same

time, that resolution truly offers a new way for us to move forward

with this seemingly intractable problem we face in that part of the

world.

I have referred to the Warner resolution as a new way forward, a new

plan, a plan C, if you will, because it finds a middle ground between

the President's plan A, which is to escalate the military effort in

Iraq, and plan B, which is pushed by some American citizens in

each one of our offices every day who say we should immediately leave

Iraq--we should immediately leave Iraq. From my point of view, the

bipartisan resolution we came up with offers a new direction forward.

Our bipartisan group believes what we need to do is to have a new

strategy in Iraq, one based on demanding long-overdue compromises from

the Iraqi Government, vigorous counterterrorism activity, continued

support of our troops in the field, protecting the territorial

integrity of Iraq, and a very robust and enhanced diplomatic effort in

that region and in Iraq itself.

The new way forward reflected in the Warner resolution is based on a

number of key principles, as follows:

First, the central goal of the American mission in Iraq should be to

encourage the Iraqi Government to make the political compromises that

are necessary to foster reconciliation and to improve the deteriorating

security situation in Iraq.

Second, the American military strategy should be focused on

maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq, denying terrorists a

safe haven, promoting regional stability, bringing security to Baghdad,

and training--and training--and equipping the Iraqi forces.

These are important principles, and they continue.

Third, we say what we would like to see happen in Iraq is that the

United States should engage the nations in that region to develop a

regional peace and reconciliation process.

Fourth, we believe the United States should continue to engage in a

strong counterterrorism activity, chasing down al-Qaida wherever al-

Qaida might be.

Fifth, the American mission in Iraq should be conditioned upon the

Iraqi Government meeting certain benchmarks, including ensuring an

equitable distribution of oil revenues in that country.

And sixth, Congress should not eliminate or reduce funds for troops

in the field because the brave men and women fighting this war need our

support while they are in harm's way.

I believe plan C offers us the right way forward. It is my hope that

resolution ultimately would be adopted by a large bipartisan group of

Senators in this body.

I would like to discuss in further detail a couple of the key

elements, at least in terms of how I see it, on how we move forward, on

how we improve the security situation along Iraq's borders, and the

need for an enhanced and much more robust diplomatic effort.

I believe the territorial integrity of Iraq, security along Iraq's

borders, and, for that matter, security in the region is linked with

the need for a renewed and vigorous diplomatic push.

The bipartisan Iraq Study Group stated in very simple terms:

In addition, the public portion of the National Intelligence

Estimate--which was a consensus document produced by the 16 agencies

comprising the national intelligence community--mentioned three things

which could ``help to reverse the negative trends driving Iraq's

current trajectory.'' It is important to note that each of these three

strategies proposed by the NIE are fundamentally diplomatic and

political, as opposed to military.

They are, first of all, a recommendation that the broader Sunni

acceptance of the current political structure and federalism be brought

about; secondly, that significant concessions by Shia and Kurds are

required to create space for Sunni acceptance of federalism; and,

third, a bottom-up approach is needed to help mend the frayed

relationships between the tribal and religious groups.

The two most important documents produced on the Iraq war over the

past 6 months, the Iraq Study Group report and the public portions of

the NIE, recommend a renewed diplomatic and political effort as a

keystone for security inside Iraq and in the region.

This is no surprise when you consider the situation along the borders

of Iraq. To the east, we know of the damage Iran can potentially cause

by crossing the relatively porous border in order to promote the Shia

cause. Not only that, but Iran has steadfastly ignored the U.N.'s

demand to halt their nuclear activities. To the south and west, Saudi

Arabia might eventually decide to intervene on the side of the Sunnis,

should the situation further deteriorate. To the north and west, of

course, is Syria, which has a largely uncontrolled border with Iraq,

across which foreign fighters and arms and terrorists cross even today

as I speak. To the north is Turkey, which is watching the situation in

Iraq and might decide to intervene in order to prevent an independent

Kurdistan. Finally, Jordan, to the west, is feeling the strain of the

massive influx of Iraqi refugees into their country, which could have a

destabilizing effect on a country which is such an important ally of

the United States.

Given the potential crisis on Iraq's east, west, north, and south

borders, given the complex and conflicting interests the parties in the

region face, and given the difficulty of imposing a military solution

on this expanding, deteriorating puzzle, it is imperative to embark on

a renewed and robust diplomatic and political effort in the manner

outlined in the Warner resolution. That effort, in my view, must

include the following:

First, it must include talks with each of the key players in the

region. I agree with the Iraq Study Group report which stated that:

This does not mean direct talks will necessarily succeed quickly or

even succeed at all. But it does mean the United States should use

every available carrot and stick, every diplomatic tool we have to try

to stabilize the region.

Second, the United States and those who share a vision of a peaceful

Middle East should organize an international conference to help the

Iraqis promote national reconciliation and stronger relations with

their neighbors.

Third, we should heed the advice of the Iraq Study Group and promote

the creation of an Iraq international support group which would include

each country that borders Iraq and other key countries in the region.

That support group would work to strengthen Iraq's territorial and

sovereign integrity and would provide a diplomatic forum for Iraq's

neighbors, many of whom have competing and conflicting interests to

negotiate.

We may very well engage Iraq's neighbors and find we cannot achieve

common ground. But I believe that refusing to talk to our adversaries

on principle simply because they are our adversaries has done us no

good. Indeed, in our history, Presidents from both parties and of

different ideological stripes, from Franklin Roosevelt to Ronald

Reagan, have actively engaged countries and leaders with whom they

strongly disagreed, and they did so because it was in the American

national interest. In fact, even this administration diplomatically

engaged a member of the so-called ``axis of evil,'' North Korea. And

while this process was long and laborious, it appears to have borne

fruit. I believe we are at a similar moment in Iraq, when a strong and

tough diplomatic effort may offer our last best chance to achieve a

measure of peace and stability for Iraq and for the region.

For that reason, I believe we should follow the advice of the Iraq

Study Group, the authors of the National Intelligence Estimate, and the

advice of Senators from both sides of the aisle in pursuing a new

direction in Iraq. There are no guarantees of success, but we must make

every effort to succeed before it is too late.

I want to make a statement relative to why I think it is such an

important time for us to be involved in this debate. It was not that

long ago when I went with two of the most distinguished Senators in

this body to Iraq and Afghanistan and spent time in both countries with

both Senator Warner and Senator Levin. For all of us who are Members of

this body, there are no two Senators whom we hold in higher esteem.

They truly are Senators whom I would call ``a Senator's Senator''

because they have the respect of

their colleagues. They have the wisdom they have accumulated through

their service to our country over decades, and they are always

attempting to do what is best for the American interest. I remember in

Baghdad having conversations with both Senator Warner and Senator Levin

and how they described how things had changed from the initial invasion

to the time we were there in the heavily fortified Green Zone in

Baghdad and as we traveled around the country.

Since that time, Senator Warner and others have been back there. As

we have heard in this Chamber, the distinguished Senator from Virginia

talked about how 3 or 4 months ago, he described the situation in Iraq

as drifting sideways. Today that situation is not only drifting

sideways but it continues to deteriorate. So no matter how much our

troops have done, the sacrifice they have made, the sacrifices their

families have made, things have not only drifted sideways, they

continue to deteriorate. The President's proposal, which is at the

heart of this debate, has to do with whether we should send 21,500 more

troops into harm's way. We should all ask the question whether that is

something we shouldn't support, and we should have an opportunity to

vote on that concept in this Chamber. We should have an opportunity to

vote on that concept in this Chamber before the President moves forward

with the escalation effort.

In my view, and part of the reason I joined Senator Warner and

Senator Nelson and others in their resolution, I don't believe it will

work. I believe when we look at Operation Going Forward Together in

June and Operation Going Forward Together 2 in August, they demonstrate

that a surge of this kind will, in fact, not work. Indeed, the Iraq

Study Group found that between the months of June and the time they

issued their report, violence had escalated in Baghdad by 43 percent.

So we have tried a surge twice, and it has failed. Now the President is

saying we ought to go ahead and do yet another surge. I believe a

simple resolution we can vote on that makes a simple statement that we

support our troops and we oppose the escalation of the military effort

in Iraq in the way the President has proposed is the right thing for us

to vote on. It is the most important question of our time. It is

appropriate for us to be spending this Friday and Saturday, and, if it

so takes, all of next week, instead of going back to our respective

States and working during the Presidents holiday to debate this issue,

which is such a defining issue of our time. This is a defining issue

for the 21st century, not only for Iraq but for the Middle East, for

the war on terror which we wage around the globe; this is the defining

issue, and it is appropriate for us to be having this discussion on the

floor today. Hopefully, we will have an opportunity to move forward

into the debate on this resolution.

I yield the floor.