Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, clearly, without doubt, without question, the war in

Iraq is the leading concern of the American people, as well it should

be. It is a very difficult situation, and a situation that will define

our future and our security for years to come. Because it is the

dominant, the leading concern of the American people, without any close

second, I think it is imperative we have a debate and votes on this

crucial question.

I would urge the majority leader to come back to the floor and engage

in this debate and move forward with this discussion and accept the

very reasonable compromise of the minority leader in narrowing down all

of the universe of ideas and resolutions to simply two.

I will freely admit that is not my first preference in terms of this

debate. I had always heard before coming here 2 years ago that the

Senate was about open debate, unlimited debate, the ability to get your

ideas and your amendments and your resolutions to the floor with very

few limits. So I thought, particularly in the context of this very

serious situation in Iraq, we needed an open debate, we needed more

ideas, not fewer, we needed every significant vote that should be

taken.

So that was my preference: unlimited debate. But the majority leader

rejected that, only would allow very limited votes, very limited

debate. At the end of the day--again, it was not my first choice, but

at the end of the day, the minority leader said: OK, you want two

votes--only two votes--OK. Let's focus on two proposals. Let's have

just two votes. But our choice for our one proposal will be the Gregg

amendment because we feel so strongly about supporting our troops in

the field. And then the majority leader said no, I can't accept that. I

need to choose your proposal. I need to choose what you want to put up

for a vote.

That is not the tradition of the Senate. And, more importantly, that

is not treating this very serious issue, the dominant concern among all

Americans, bar none, properly. We need to debate this issue now. We

need to vote on this issue now. Again, I urge the majority leader to

come back to the floor and engage in this debate this week--now--

because the country is concerned now about Iraq. The country has

questions, understandably, now about the President's plan. And our

troops in the field have questions and uncertainty now about whether we

will be standing shoulder to shoulder with them no matter what policy

is adopted.

Again, I think the minority leader's proposal yesterday bent over

backwards--compromise and compromise and compromise--to reach an

ability to have this debate we must have on the floor of the Senate. We

wanted far more than two proposals debated. We wanted far more than two

votes. But we accepted the majority leader's number. We accepted the

majority leader's parameters of just two proposals, just two votes. But

surely the minority gets to choose one of those two proposals to

discuss, particularly given that this Gregg proposal has broad

bipartisan support.

So let's have this Iraq debate that we must have. Let's have key

votes that we must have. And let's do it now. I urge the majority

leader, again, not to give up, not to reject this very reasonable

compromise, bending over backwards by the minority leader to agree to

his number of two. Let's take that up. Let's have this debate. Let's

have crucial votes. The American people deserve that, given the very

tough situation in Iraq. And our men and women in uniform sure as heck

deserve that. They sure as heck deserve to hear from us: OK, we know

some of you are for the President's surge plan; we know some of you are

against it. But what about supporting whatever troops are put in the

field? They sure as heck deserve an answer to that question. And they

certainly deserve that reassurance.

Let's have that fair debate, and let's have it now.

Madam President, I yield the floor.