Madam President, it is interesting that we would be

preparing today to have a debate that will not be taking place, and it

will not be taking place because it is the prerogative of the

leadership to set the agenda of what we do discuss and debate.

I agree with my colleagues who have requested an opportunity to have

a full airing of the views, to have a full debate, to have an

opportunity to express our support for the men and women in the field,

in addition to whatever else we might want to debate on this topic of

the most important issue facing our country today.

But getting beyond the procedural and the tit for tat that so often

signifies what Washington is about, what fundamentally is this debate

about? It is about the global war on terror. It is about the events

that unfolded in our country on the morning of September 11, 2001, and

the aftermath of all of that, the things that have occurred as our

Nation has responded to the attacks that were brought upon our shores,

as we have sought to carry out this difficult mission, but one in which

we must not waiver, which is this war on terror.

As a result of this war on terror, our troops are in Iraq today,

where they have removed a dictator from power and where they have

confronted the enemy, which regardless of how someone might have felt

about the original decision to go into Iraq, today we are there and we

are engaging an enemy that is the very enemy that attacked us here on

9/11.

It is known that in Al Anbar Province it is fundamentally an al-Qaida

operation. So to send additional reinforcements to Al Anbar Province to

defeat al-Qaida in Iraq is in the best interests of this Nation. It is

in our national interest to pacify, to bring some peace to Baghdad,

which is the capital city of Iraq, which is essential to the peace and

security of that nation, of that budding democracy that is attempting

to put itself on its feet, and to bring some stability to that capital

city by additional reinforcements of American troops in a new plan I

think is reasonable.

We cannot get so focused on whether some in this body cannot work

with this President, do not want to support any of his policies. But

let's look at the people who are going to carry out this policy, the

generals who are going to be in the field.

In the past few days, as has been stated, we have approved by a

near--well, I guess it was unanimous; it was 81 to 0, I believe--the

sending of General Petraeus as our new commander of

allied forces in Iraq. I recall his testimony in the Armed Services

Committee where he clearly said he believed in this plan and thought it

had a reasonable chance of success. Why would we not give a reasonable

chance of success a chance to succeed? Why would we not stand behind

our men and women who are willing to go into harm's way to carry out

this plan and see if they have an opportunity to succeed?

The goal of this new plan is threefold. First, we have to have some

stability in Baghdad. We have to continue to defeat al-Qaida in Al

Anbar Province. But then beyond that there are other elements to the

plan. There obviously needs to be a political reconciliation. There

needs to be a political settlement. But that will never take place if

there is not some modicum of stability, if we do not bring down the

sectarian violence and other violence in Iraq to a manageable level.

We then have an opportunity for the political settlement to take

place between the Shias and Sunnis, and the Kurds in the north, so they

can all come together and begin to bind as a new nation, as a new

country, as a new government--a government, by the way, that has only

been in place about 9 months.

In addition to that, we then have a third angle to this, which I

think is so vitally important, which is the economic reconstruction,

the economic development, the opportunity for there to be jobs, for

there to be opportunities for folks to find a way to make a better life

for themselves and their children, so they can reach their aspirations,

and do it in an atmosphere of freedom, do it in an atmosphere of

democracy and respect for one another. That is the goal.

What would happen if we do not give this plan a chance, if we do not

see if it has an opportunity to carry out and have an opportunity for

success? What is the alternative? Well, we would then have failed in

this test of wills. Our enemies have clearly stated they believe if

they kill enough Americans, if they cause enough grief to our mothers,

if they cause enough harm to our troops, we will not stand up, we will

move on, we will find an easier way, and we will not resist those who

would bring the destruction of our country upon us.

Their stated aims are very clear. They want us out of the Middle

East. They want to be able to get America out of the Middle East. They

do not want us there because they know we are what stands between them

and the opportunity of creating a radical Islamic new caliphate in that

region of the world, and the danger that would all bring about.

The new intelligence estimate on Iraq we have seen gives a window

into what would happen if we had a precipitous withdrawal over the next

12 to 18 months. It would not be a pretty picture. Sectarian violence

would ensue. Unquestionably, we would have a Shia-dominated Middle

East. Already they are, through their proxies, in Lebanon, in Syria.

They have a strong alliance with them. They are trying to take over the

Palestinian movement.

Over the next 12 to 18 months, the assessments would be very dire of

what would take place if we were to be out of the region: an escalation

of violence, a diminished chance for stability, no chance for positive

change.

The estimates suggest that a key aim in Iraq is to stabilize the

situation from the standpoint of violence, enough to let the political

changes that have to happen take place. I am going to quote from the

estimate. It says from the public version:

Isn't that a better way? Isn't that what we all want, what the Senate

should be on record as supporting--this opportunity for our troops to

be successful, and not only to be in harm's way fighting for our

country, but also to know that the Senate stands behind them, will not

cut off their funds, will stand with them as they go into battle, and

will stand with them as they do the hard work of freedom--work done by

many other generations of America any time they have been called upon

to stand for freedom, stand for the rule of law, and to give this

budding new democracy an opportunity to take hold and take root.

Madam President, I am disappointed that today we will not have an

opportunity to have a fuller debate, that I won't have the opportunity

to be on record with a vote reflecting where I stand, which all of us

should be willing to do--take a stand, take a position supporting our

troops.

I personally would also be in support of this plan which I believe

gives us the best opportunity for success, which is the only plan out

there. Those who would not give this plan a chance owe the American

people an alternative but one that would have a reasonable chance for

success. Success is what we are after. A victory in this part of the

world would send a strong message to our enemies. So I am disappointed

we will not vote today.

I hope the majority leader will reconsider and come back to have an

earnest debate and take the votes that are necessary to be taken.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.