Madam President, we have heard a debate over the last

hour about where we stand on the resolutions and debating the

escalation of the war in Iraq. Here is where we are at the end of the

day. We can dot all the i's, cross all the t's, and do all of the

legalistic parsing that we want. The minority is blocking a vote on the

issue that the American people wish to hear us on: Do you support or

oppose the escalation? It is that simple.

The minority's action ratifies the President's escalation. And any

Senator who voted to prevent the Warner resolution from coming to the

floor is saying to his or her constituents: I support that escalation.

We know what is going on. The minority is torn between loyalty to

their President and following the will of their voters. I have not seen

a single State where, at least from the polling data, the public

supports the escalation. There should be a simple vote, and not as an

end to this debate but as a beginning to this debate. The minority is

tying itself in a pretzel so that there will not be a vote.

Now, the Gregg resolution is missing two words. Look at it. Read it.

It doesn't have the word ``surge,'' and it doesn't have the word

``escalation.'' It is ambiguously worded so that it tries to tie

support for the troops with the escalation, but without saying so. It

is a resolution that is intended to befuddle, perplex, obfuscate, and

to hide.

The good news is that the American people don't follow the details of

all of this debate. They don't have the time. They are busy with their

lives, their families, their jobs, the joys and sorrows of life. But

they follow the big picture. The big picture is simple: Senator Reid

has labored mightily to have a clear, unobstructed, unobliterated vote

on whether you support or oppose the escalation.

The minority leader, backed by all but two of his membership, has

said we do not want to vote; we want to let the President go forward

with the escalation, without taking responsibility for it. The public

is seeing that. The public understands.

My good friend from Mississippi was talking in the hallway. He said

the job of the Senate is to take the tough votes. You bet it is. It is

not whether we are saying we support the troops--which everybody agrees

that we do--in an ambiguously designed amendment to support escalation

and get their way, and those against it get their way. The bottom line

is simple: the tough vote is ``yes'' or ``no'' on the escalation.

Again, I salute our majority leader. He has done everything to try to

bring that vote to the floor. The minority leader has done everything

to obstruct that vote. The good news is that we will have plenty of

further opportunity to get that vote and, make no mistake about it,

this majority, in the belief that the escalation is wrong, in the

belief that there is no strategy in Iraq

other than to police a civil war, which no one bargained for, will be

resolute and we will find ample opportunities to not only get a sense-

of-the-Senate vote on whether you support or oppose the escalation, but

to move further and ratchet up the pressure on the President so that he

changes his strategy.

The number of people in America who believe that our strategy in Iraq

is succeeding gets smaller every day. I think it is below 1 in 4 right

now, which means that close to a majority of Republicans don't agree

with the strategy. Obviously, if the President came here 3 years ago

and said we are going to have our troops on Haifa Street patrolling a

civil war between the Sunnis and Shiites--how many people would have

voted for that? How many Americans would have supported it? But that is

exactly what we are doing. The vast majority of the troops that the

President is asking for will continue to do just that and only that.

So this debate is coming only to a temporary close. One thing stands

out clearly: the Republican minority is allowing the President to go

forward with the escalation. It is supporting the escalation but

doesn't want to vote to say so. My colleagues, that will not wash. The

American people are too smart. They are too concerned. They are too

worried about the brave men and women over there risking their lives as

Sunnis shoot at Shiites and Shiites shoot at Sunnis. To hold the

minority's feet to the fire, we will be resolute in making sure that

happens.

The Gregg resolution is obfuscatory. It is designed to give people

cover who don't want to say yes or no. But make no mistake about it,

the people want a yes or a no. They want us to act on that yes or no as

we come forward with the supplementary budget request next month. And

this majority, limited as it may be, will endeavor to do just that.

Yes, indeed.

Indeed. I thank my colleague for asking the question.

Again, the minority says it is our job to take some tough votes. Here,

here. We want to take what is a tough vote for some: Are you for the

surge? Are you for the escalation or are you against it? They are doing

everything they can to avoid it. But as my good friend from

Massachusetts has so aptly pointed out, the bottom line is that now is

the time to go on record--now, before most of the troops are there;

now, when we can ratchet up pressure on the President to change his

policy, as the independent study group said, and so many generals have

said. I might add, from the press reports, the Prime Minister of Iraq

doesn't want them. We are almost in Alice in Wonderland here.

I will say one other thing. The good news is simple: the American

people get it. They know that the war in Iraq doesn't have a strategy.

They know it is headed toward a dead end. They know that policing a

civil war makes no sense, and they know what we are trying to do, which

is forcing a ``yes'' or ``no'' vote--get a ``yes'' or ``no'' vote and

move forward to change that strategy. No amount of wordsmithing on the

other side is going to change that fact.

Today, the Republican minority said: We are for the surge, and we

will let the President go forward and do it.

I yield to my colleague for another question.

Madam President, the Senator is exactly right. And I

will add one other point to his very prescient comments. Let us say we

have this surge and then troops leave after a certain amount of time--

some say the end of the summer, some say it will go on 3, 4, 5 years.

What is going to happen then if we don't have a political solution the

good Senator asks about? The Sunni and Shia will resume fighting, and

we will have accomplished nothing. We will have seen the lives of some

of our brave men and women be taken from them, American soldiers. We

will have created more havoc in Iraq. And we will have, again, delayed

the very political solution my friend from Massachusetts talks about,

which is essential.

If there had been a change in Government, if there had been a change

in strategy, perhaps--I can't say because I don't know what it would

be, given this administration hasn't changed anything--maybe the

American people, maybe some on this side of the aisle would say: Give

it a chance. But to send more of our brave troops over there when there

is no change in strategy, when it is just increasing policing of a

civil war, and when, at the end of this so-called surge, this

escalation, nothing will have changed, the American people have every

right to ask: To what end?

That is what we are asking. That is why we want a simple vote. And

that is why today is going to go down in history as a day when this

Republican minority in this House said to the President: We are

supporting your surge. We don't want to vote on it, but we are allowing

it to happen. We are encouraging it to happen. And the very rubberstamp

nature, when the minority was in the majority, that brought them to

such trouble in November of 2006 is simply continuing.

I thank the Senator. Once again, he is right on the

money. He is right on the money.

The Senator is right on the money, and it is, again, a

pattern. The experts--intelligence, military, diplomatic--tell the

administration what they are doing is wrong, tell the administration

that all the signs on the ground point to a policy that is failing, and

they keep their head in the sand and just go forward. It is a tragedy.

It is a tragedy when truth is not exalted and when there is a desire to

stifle debate, as has happened in the administration and is happening

on the floor of the Senate today.

We all love this country, everyone in this Chamber, regardless of

politics, but at least for me--and I dearly love America--every day we

delay hurts us a little more and a little more and a little more. We

dig ourselves deeper in a hole from which it will be harder and harder

to extricate ourselves.

Madam President, I yield the floor.