Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, as a new Member of this body, I must tell you that I

am frustrated and disappointed. I am disappointed that the Republicans

are blocking a vote on whether we support or oppose the President's

plan to add additional troops to Iraq. I can tell you that is the issue

of the day. That is what my constituents are asking of us, and I think

they have a right to expect that the Members of this body are willing

to go on record either for or against the President's plan to add

additional troops to Iraq.

I have listened to my colleagues. I have listened to my colleagues in

committee, and I have listened to my colleagues on this floor, and I

think the majority of us want to go on record opposing the surge. Both

Democrats and Republicans oppose it. I think there is a bipartisan

group that can provide the consensus in this body to go on record

against the surge.

Several months ago, the President said we were going to have a new

plan in Iraq. Shortly after that, the Iraq Study Group came out with

its report. To me, this has been the best analysis of the situation

that we have before us. The study group is composed of distinguished

members, and it was a creation of the Congress. Secretary Baker, who

cochaired the group, served in three administrations and has broad

experience in government. Mr. Hamilton, who served in the other body on

the Foreign Relations Committee, the Committee on International

Relations it is called over there, has served with great distinction

both as chairman and ranking member. The other members of the

committee--they said we cannot win in Iraq through our military

efforts. That is not going to bring success in Iraq. The Iraqis must

step forward and defend their own country and we must move forward with

new diplomatic efforts. We need ``a new diplomatic offensive'' is what

they called it, and they said: We need to start that before December

31, 2006. The ability of the United States to influence events within

Iraq is diminishing. We still have not seen that new offensive

diplomatic effort.

GEN George Casey said, ``It has always been my view that heavy and

sustained American military presence was not going to solve the

problems in Iraq over the long term.''

We got the President's plan and the President's plan was more of the

same, stay the course but with more U.S. military presence. We had 3

weeks of hearings before the Foreign Relations Committee. Military

expert after military expert, foreign policy expert after foreign

policy expert, told us that there is a deterioration in Iraq and our

policies are not working and we need to move in a new direction. We

need to come to grips with the fact that the Iraqis must stand up and

defend their own country and we must engage the international community

much more aggressively.

I congratulate Senator Warner and Senator Levin for coming forward

with a compromise resolution that allows us to go on record opposed to

the increased American military presence in Iraq. I do not agree with

everything that is in that resolution, but I do think it clearly puts

the Senate on record against the increased surge of American troops in

Iraq, and that is our responsibility. That is what we should be doing.

We should not hide behind procedural roadblocks to avoid voting on that

issue. That is the most important issue facing this Nation today, and

we should be willing to vote on that issue. It is not about the

President of the United States. It is about this body carrying out its

responsibility. That is what each of us has a responsibility to do.

Why am I so much against the increase in the U.S. military presence

in Iraq? Let me first start with the numbers. The President said the

surge would involve 21,500 additional American troops in Iraq. That is

not the case. Michael Gilmore, the Assistant Director for National

Security at the Congressional Budget Office, testified yesterday before

our Budget Committee, and he said it is not going to be 21,500, it is

going to be closer to 48,000 additional American troops because the

21,500 are the frontline combat troops. You need the support staff in

order to support the 21,500.

The budget the President submitted to us said that is going to cost

about $5.6 billion, but CBO now says it is going to be closer to $20 to

$27 billion of additional cost, just with the surge, in addition to

what we are already spending. The President claims his budget is to

balance in 5 years, but he has no cost for the Iraq war beyond 2008.

The numbers speak for themselves. The President is asking us to go

along with stay the course but at a higher cost, both in American

military presence and the costs to American taxpayers in this country.

The situation in Iraq is deteriorating. Every person who has come

before us who is an expert in this area has acknowledged that. There is

a civil war in Iraq, and Americans have paid a very heavy price for our

commitment

in Iraq--over 3,000 dead and many more with life-changing injuries.

There have been hundreds of billions of dollars spent. That represents

missed opportunities in America--money we need to strengthen our

military and national defense. We have used our National Guard and

reservists. We should be supporting them, improving the quality of life

for our soldiers and for our veterans. Our soldiers have served with

great distinction and valor. We owe it to them to get it right. We owe

it to them to do everything we can for a successful outcome in Iraq.

That is why it is our responsibility, on behalf of our soldiers, to

take up this issue.

We have lost our focus in the war against terror, we have weakened

U.S. influence internationally, and, yes, we have lost other

opportunities beyond defense because those hundreds of billions of

dollars we spent could have been spent to balance our budget, could

have been spent to increase our commitment to national priorities such

as education and health care and the environment. But we have lost

those issues.

The first order of business for us should be to go on record against

increasing the American military presence in Iraq. That should be our

first order of business. But then we need to do more. I opposed the war

from the beginning. I voted against it in the other body. I have been a

critic of the President in the management of the war, in his failure to

properly engage the international community both before and after going

into Iraq, and the decision made by someone in the White House to take

out the Iraqi security forces when we went in, that was a mistake. I

have been pretty consistent against the President, but we need to do

more than pass this resolution. I think we should take up this

resolution first. This is the first order of business. But then we need

to do more.

The Iraqis have a responsibility to take care of their own security

needs in the midst of a civil war. We need to engage the international

community with a diplomatic and political initiative so the Government

of Iraq has the confidence of the ethnic communities. This is sectarian

violence. We need to change the way the Iraqis are doing business and

help them through diplomatic efforts. We need to engage the

international community. We need more assistance in training Iraqi

security forces. You can't do it all by Americans; we need the

international community. We need the international community to help us

with the humanitarian crisis that is in Iraq. The number of refugees,

displaced individuals, is in the millions. We need the help of the

international community to deal with the humanitarian crisis. You are

not going to have peace in Iraq until you deal with that.

We need the help of the international community on the infrastructure

improvements, the economy of Iraq. The American taxpayers cannot do it

alone, and we have wasted a lot of our taxpayer dollars in Iraq. We

need the international community to help us. In short, we need a new

direction, a plan that includes bringing some of our combat troops

home, to make it clear to the Iraqis we are not going to be there

indefinitely, to make it clear to the international community we expect

the Iraqis to take care of their own security needs. That is what we

need.

But first things first. Let's take a vote on the President's plan.

Let's get that done. Let's stop using procedural roadblocks to prevent

a vote in this body but to vote for or against the President's plan to

bring more troops to Iraq.

Then we should consider additional options to make it clear it is our

responsibility to help bring about a new direction for American

involvement in Iraq.

I yield the floor.