Mr. President, the Senator from Georgia is also

waiting to speak, so I would like to be notified at 4 1/2 minutes, and

I will split it down the middle with the Senator from Georgia.

Mr. President, I rise today to speak about General Petraeus'

testimony. I was able to watch a little bit of it before I came over

here. I was beginning to see, of course, the questioning from the Armed

Services Committee. I think it is so important that we look at the big

picture and what General Petraeus is saying. Also, of course, we have

Ambassador Crocker who is doing a terrific job over there.

I was there at the end of February, just 6 weeks ago. I met with both

of them. But what I saw was an incredible change from the other time I

had been in Iraq. As General Petraeus said himself, from June 2007

through February 2008 deaths from ethno-sectarian violence in Bagdad

have fallen 90 percent. American casualties have fallen sharply, down

by 70 percent. In the last year, the number of high-profile attacks

have fallen by 50 percent.

All of us believe one American death is not worth the price we would

pay if we had a choice. But every one of those who are there understand

our mission and how important it is. Every one of those with whom I

have met, both the people who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan

and the families of those who have lost loved ones, say: Do not leave.

Do not leave without a victory, without seeing through the successes

that we have gained.

They understand this mission. Unfortunately, it does not seem that

the majority in the Congress see it as those who are on the ground and

who have suffered the most do. As recently as February, the Senate

leadership was trying to stop the surge by requiring an immediate and

arbitrary withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq when we didn't even have

the results. Yet those of us who have been there recently have seen the

results.

I went to a police station with our embedded forces and to a security

regional center with embedded forces. I did that because I was very

concerned. I wanted to see it myself. I was very pleased with the fact

that our troops embedded there were causing the Iraqis to come forward

and do more and help us.

The Sons of Iraq, which are now 91,000 strong, are serving as

neighborhood watches. They are manning the checkpoints. They are taking

us to the weapons caches. Do you know that, since the beginning of this

year, we have found, because of the Sons of Iraq's cooperation, more

weapons than we discovered in all of 2006? We are making progress. Mr.

President, 21,000 of the Sons of Iraq have now been accepted into

security forces or government work. It is amazing that we are seeing

military gains, and we are seeing political gains. It is not as fast as

we would like to see it, of course, but it is progress. It is in the

right direction.

The consequences of leaving precipitously are consequences that would

be unthinkable. People talk about the cost of Iraq, the cost of the war

on terror, as if the costs are prohibitive. The costs are high. But the

cost of leaving and letting al-Qaida have a base in Iraq are much more

expensive. We are talking about 9/11 costing over $1 trillion, if you

put it in monetary terms, which I don't think we should--this is not

the thing that we should even be considering. We should be supporting

our troops, and we should be supporting the effort that would require

complete success for our country. This is the United States of America.

I met with the Vets for Freedom who just met by Senator Bond as well.

They are the patriots who have been there, who know what it is like,

and who are saying stay and fight and win. It is the right thing for

the United States of America to do.

I yield the floor.