Mr. President, after 52 months--about 210 weeks--and about

1,500 days, America finds itself mired in one of the most tragic

foreign policy blunders in our Nation's history. The sad part about it

is, there is no end in sight. In my view, and that of academics and

others, it will take years, and even decades, to finally close the book

on the damage this war has caused our troops, our economy, and our

moral standing in the world.

On May 24, 2007, President Bush said:

That is the quote of President Bush.

This weekend, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki--for whom President Bush

has expressed consistent support and confidence--said that Iraqi forces

could take control of their security at ``any time'' American troops

want to leave or were to leave.

A recent poll of the Iraqi people showed that 21 percent think the

American presence makes their country safer, while 69 percent say it

puts them, the Iraqi people, at greater risk. That is what the Iraqis

say.

The Iraqi people and their leaders say they are ready for us to end

our combat operation. I think it is time we listen to them.

In the war's soon to be 5 years, our troops have accomplished

everything they have been asked to do. They took down the Iraqi

dictator. They secured the country for not one, not two, but three

elections. They provided the security needed for Iraqi factions to come

together to negotiate peaceful settlement of their differences.

But the Iraqi leaders have not done their part. After these 52

months: more than 3,600 Americans killed, tens of thousands wounded,

and after nearly $600 billion of American taxpayer dollars spent. And

after this sacrifice--52 months of sacrifice--it is long past time for

the Iraqi leaders and the Iraqi people to put their words into action

by taking responsibility for their own future. After 52 months, more

than 3,600 Americans killed, tens of thousands wounded, and nearly 600

billion in taxpayer dollars spent, President Bush continues to tell our

troops and all Americans that we should wait it out, just stay the

course. After 52 months, our troops and our security cannot afford the

President's ``run-out-the-clock'' strategy.

We have an opportunity and an obligation to change course in Iraq

right now. We can remove our brave troops from the front lines of

another country's civil war, a conflict we have no business policing

and little chance to diffuse. We can conduct the kind of tough and

strong diplomacy required to stabilize Iraq and the region, which even

the President's own military experts plead with him to revise.

Remember, General Petraeus has said the war cannot be won militarily.

We can refocus our resources and fight a real war on terror that drives

the terrorists back to the darkest caves and corners of the Earth.

We can choose that path now. We don't have to mark time waiting for

the President to wake up one morning with a change of heart or his term

to run out. We don't have to wait 2 more months for an arbitrary

September deadline when it is so clear a course change is required and

required now. With our courage and our votes, we can rise above the

tragic failure to deliver a new course that our brave troops and all

Americans demand and deserve. We can do that today by voting for the

Levin-Reed amendment to the Defense authorization bill.

What does Levin-Reed do? It sets a firm date and an end date to

transition the mission and begin the reduction of U.S. forces beginning

120 days after enactment and completed by April 30 of 2008. Levin-Reed

limits the U.S. military mission after April 30 to counterterrorism;

the training of Iraqi security forces and protection of U.S. personnel

and assets; requires that the reduction in forces be part of a

comprehensive, diplomatic, regional, political, and economic effort;

and appoints an international mediator to bring together the warring

factions. That provision dealing with appointing an international

mediator to bring together warring factions was newly placed in the

bill. The idea and the language came from Senator Hagel of Nebraska and

is a great addition to this amendment.

To those who say this language is binding on the President, I say it

is, and that is what it is meant to be. It is binding because the

President has resisted every effort we have made to work with him to

change the direction of his failed Iraq policy. The record will show

that binding language was not our first choice. We passed legislation

requiring that 2006 be a year of transition. Instead, the President

ignored this language and dug us in even deeper into an intractable

civil war. We gave the President a chance to develop his own new course

as Commander in Chief. He refused to do that. Instead, he chose to

extend deployments and ask even more of our brave men and women in

uniform.

Earlier this year we passed legislation that would have begun the

phased redeployment while leaving significant discretion to the

President about how and when to execute the redeployment. Instead, the

President vetoed this bill and asserted that only he had the power to

set war policy, even though we have a constitutional obligation to do

so.

So the record is clear, the President's decision to stubbornly cling

to the current course leaves this body no choice but to enact binding

language. He has failed to lead us out of Iraq. We are ready to show

him the way.

I am going to propound a unanimous consent. I have the greatest

respect for my friend, the distinguished junior Senator from Arizona,

but I say that I am going to enforce the rule that when I propound

this, the distinguished Senator from Arizona should either agree to it

or object. This is not the time for speeches because if he objects to

it, I have more to say.

So I ask unanimous consent that if the House further amends H.R. 1

with the text of H.R. 1401 and requests a conference with the Senate--

Mr. President, I misread the first line. I ask unanimous consent that

if the House further amends H.R. 1 with the text of H.R. 1401 and

requests a conference with the Senate, that the Senate agree to the

request and appoint the same conferees which the Senate has already

appointed to H.R. 1.