Madam President, I was precluded from speaking prior to

the vote taken on the Iraq supplemental. I am going to speak for about

15 minutes at this time and voice my strong opposition, as Senator

Shelby, to the conference report that just passed this body. This bill

is a highly irresponsible bill showing both a disregard for taxpayer

money and our American service people. It is probably the most

dangerous bill I have seen in over 20 years of service in the Congress

of the United States.

I don't say that lightly. Last month I came to the floor to voice my

opposition to the emergency supplemental spending bill. I wanted a

clean bill that the President could sign into law. Instead, today we

passed a bill that ties troop funding to arbitrary withdrawal deadlines

and billions and billions of dollars in unrelated spending.

Now, 3 weeks later, we find ourselves with essentially the same piece

of legislation. It is an insult to the men and women who serve in our

armed services. Funding our troops is not a political game. We are a

nation at war. There are unexpected costs and needs that must be

continued to promote our freedoms and troops at home and help them

succeed in Iraq. That is why we have emergency supplemental

legislation. It is used to meet the immediate needs of the men and

women in the Armed Forces on our frontlines.

The extra spending goes beyond emergency needs and, instead, adds

additional nondefense funds that are not necessary right now. There is

a lot of fat in this bill that the Senate should consider under the

regular appropriations process. That is what appropriations bills are

all about. The hurricanes of 2005 were truly devastating. I have

supported the Government's rebuilding efforts in the region. But the

bill before us today includes billions of dollars in unrequested and

unnecessary funding for the Corps of Engineers. These provisions are

inappropriate for a wartime supplemental.

Another area of extra spending relates to agriculture. I have been a

strong supporter of America's farmers, but the programs in this bill do

not belong in a supplemental wartime bill. I cannot justify $20 million

for dairy farmers and $60 million for salmon fisheries in the Pacific

Northwest. This bill is about our troops, not our farmers. There are

even more glaring examples in this conference report: $18 million for

drought assistance in the upper Midwest; $25 million for NASA

facilities in the gulf region; $10 million for historic preservation

funds. This bill doubles the 20 million I opposed for asbestos

abatement at the Capitol powerplant. The list goes on.

I am ashamed that this Congress believes it can solve its own

budgetary problems on the backs of our fighting men and women.

Finally, instead of helping our troops, this supplemental bill only

ends up offending them. We ought to be sending a clear message of

support for our men and women in harm's way. It should be clear that

this Congress and this country will make sure that the men and women of

our Armed Forces have the necessary supplies and resources to carry out

their missions. Unfortunately, this legislation only serves to

undermine our military missions. It pulls the rug right out from under

our troops, just as we are at a point of seeing some signs of increased

security in Baghdad.

To me, this bill is a strategy for defeat. It sends a detrimental

message to our troops and only serves to embolden our enemies. It tells

the terrorists: Mark your calendars with our date for withdrawal from

Iraq; sit and wait for us to get out.

Like many of my colleagues, I had the opportunity to hear firsthand

from my good friend, David Petraeus, yesterday about the current

situation in Iraq. I am sorry it was a very highly classified briefing

or I would share those things with the Senate. But I want to give the

mood of his report. He was very frank in his report. The situation in

Iraq is not any closer to being resolved than it was 2 months ago when

his mission started. The country still suffers from violent sectarian

strife and is at war with a cluster of enemies, including primarily al-

Qaida, Osama bin Laden, Sunni insurgents, and Shia radicals. The other

side of the aisle has already said the war is lost. But we haven't even

given the President's plan a chance to work. We still have a long way

to go in Iraq, but sectarian killings have dropped dramatically since

January. There is greater cooperation between the U.S. forces and the

Iraqi Army, and we are beginning to see the Iraqi people work toward

complete sovereignty.

We should not dictate arbitrary guidelines for the future. The Iraqi

Government is still in a critical development stage. It must be given

the time and room to grow with our guidance. The same Senators and

Congressmen calling for an immediate withdrawal from Iraq or setting an

arbitrary withdrawal date do not discuss the ramifications of such an

action. It may be because they know that immediate withdrawal from Iraq

would be disastrous to the Middle East and threaten international

stability and our national defense. Withdrawal is not a viable option.

If we leave Iraq prematurely, we lose. Peace-loving people in Iraq

lose, and Islamic radicals and al-Qaida win. That is the situation we

are in today. We need to be honest about it as we proceed forward.

I have voted against past withdrawal language and voted against it

again today. Setting a withdrawal deadline will have grave consequences

for the United States. It will put our national security at risk. After

the President vetoes this bill--and we sustain his veto--we need to

refocus our attention and our productive manner on how to best help our

commanders on the ground to achieve success in Iraq. No arbitrary

timetable, no billions of dollars in unrelated pork--we need a clean

bill that funds our men and women in uniform and gives them a chance

for success.