Mr. President, I rise this morning to speak to the Senate

regarding the fact that we are contemplating adjournment for a recess

of approximately 12 days without having taken any votes on the question

of Iraq. The Senator from Nebraska and I sent a letter to both leaders

yesterday, expressing our deepest disappointment and disapproval about

the failure of this institution to address the most consequential issue

of our time. We are at a critical crossroads with this preeminent

issue. Yet the Senate, in keeping with its historical traditions and

practices, has failed to grapple with this monumental question.

Therefore, the Senator from Nebraska and I have said we should have a

vote on the motion to adjourn for this particular recess because we

object to recessing without the Senate having any agreement, any

understanding, any debate, any votes on this most profound question. It

does no honor to the Senate or to this country. As I said earlier in

the week when I expressed my disappointment that we have yet to

construct an agreement on how to even move forward procedurally to

debate a nonbinding resolution, irrespective of where my colleagues may

stand on this question, whether you are in the majority or in the

minority, various viewpoints ought to be able to be expressed, and we

ought to be able to have votes in the Senate. Unfortunately and

regrettably, that has not occurred, at a time in which the President

has already indicated his plan for the troop surge and which is already

underway. There is a majority in the Senate who are in opposition to

the troop surge and to that specific mission. Others have different

viewpoints on the question. But irrespective, we know there are a

majority in the United States who are in opposition to the troop surge.

The Senator from Nebraska and I, in fact, moved across the political

aisle and joined the Senator from Delaware and the Senator from

Michigan on the Biden-Levin-Hagel-Snowe resolution on January 17, when

it was introduced in the Senate. Here we are today, a month later, and

there has been no consequential action on the question of Iraq.

The House of Representatives is debating and will be voting. As I

said on Monday, when our troops are on the frontlines, the Senate is on

the sidelines. While the House of Representatives is debating and

voting, the Senate is dithering. That is regrettable because we have

some serious questions about the President's troop surge. We ought to

be able to express our views on the floor of the Senate and to have

those votes. This is a critical moment in our Nation. The Senate has

lost its sense of the place it now occupies--or should occupy--in

history.

If we look back at major moments of the Senate historically, the

Senate has risen to the occasion, but we haven't on this question. So

we are going to adjourn for the recess without having a plan on how we

are going to proceed on this question, without any votes, on the major

issue of our time.

So what has changed in the last 3 days? There have been no

negotiations. There has been no consensus. There has been no agreement.

There has been no understanding of how we are going to proceed and how

we are going to debate this question. And we are going to recess. Well,

the troop surge isn't taking a recess. The men and women in uniform on

the frontlines in Iraq are not taking a recess, the Iraq war is not

taking a recess, but the U.S. Senate is taking a recess.

My primary objection to the troop surge has been rooted in the fact

that I examined the track record and concluded we should not commit any

more troops to instilling a peace that the Iraqis are not willing to

instill for themselves and to seek for their own nation. They are

fighting amongst themselves rather than for themselves.

Yesterday, I spoke with the father of a soldier who died last Friday

while supporting our Operation Iraqi Freedom.

SSG Eric Ross of Maine, stationed in Texas, and two of his brothers

in arms were killed as they entered a booby-trapped building in Baquba.

What was even more tragic is the Iraqi squad that was accompanying

them, who were supposed to go in with them, refused to go in. What did

they know? Why did they refuse to go in? Where were their allegiances?

Who were they fighting for? Those are the kinds of circumstances and

situations to which

our troops have been subjected. There will be infinitely more of those

examples, given the mission the President has proposed in Baghdad.

The father of the soldier told me: My son's first interpreter was a

spy. Those are the kinds of precarious and dangerous circumstances

under which our soldiers are facing extraordinary challenges. Now they

are being requested to go door-to-door in Baghdad, as this soldier was

doing in Baquba. His father said they were going door to door, clearing

them out, only to find they were coming back in. That is the

circumstance our troops will face in this very dangerous mission in

Baghdad.

While we are on recess, all of this will be underway. Yet we have no

plan to debate and to vote on our respective views and positions on

this question.

This is not in keeping and consistent with the traditions and

practices of the Senate. I have served in both the House of

Representatives and the Senate for 29 years. I have witnessed and been

part of debates that range from Lebanon to the Persian Gulf to Somalia

to Bosnia to Panama. We were able to exercise our views, whether we

were in the House of Representatives or in the Senate. I am deeply

disappointed that we are at this juncture, that we are planning to

adjourn for a previously scheduled recess without having established a

record on behalf of the Senate for the people of this country. We are

their voice. We reflect their will. We should have the opportunity to

debate and to vote on the various questions.

The fact is, we have allowed the gears of this deliberative process

to become jammed with the monkey wrenches of timidity and partisanship.

I reject that because at a time in which the American people are deeply

concerned about the direction of our mission in Iraq, the Senate is

deadlocked and stalemated.

That is why I object to the motion to adjourn. I hope my colleagues

will express their objections, likewise, irrespective of where Members

stand on the question. I hope Members express disappointment and

disapproval that we will recess without having taken a stand on this

monumental issue.