Mr. President, today, Senators Brownback, Boxer, Smith,

Bill Nelson and I are introducing a bipartisan resolution. It states

clearly what so many of us agree on, the need for a political

settlement in Iraq. But then it offers what virtually no one has put

forward: a policy to actually secure that political settlement.

We propose that the United States actively support a political

settlement among Iraqis based on the provisions of Iraq's constitution

that call for creating federal system of government, with strong

regions and a limited central government.

And we urge the administration to bring in the international

community, including the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council

and Iraq's neighbors, to support a settlement based on federalism and

to convene a conference with Iraqis to help them reach that settlement.

Each of us recognizes this reality: when a country is caught in a

cycle of self-sustaining sectarian violence as Iraq is today, there are

only four ways to end it:

First, a bloodletting that leaves one side victorious or both sides

exhausted. In the case of Iraq, that could take years . . . years we do

not have and should not accept.

Second, an open-ended foreign occupation that America cannot sustain.

Third, the return of a strongman, who is not on the horizon. Even if

he were, it would be a tragic irony to replace one dictator with

another.

Or fourth, a political agreement to form a decentralized, federal

system that separates the warring factions and gives them control over

the fabric of their daily lives, including the police, jobs, education,

marriage and religion.

It's a model that worked in Bosnia. It offers the possibility, but

not the guarantee, of a soft landing Iraq.

The Bush administration has another vision for Iraq. But the entire

premise of its policy is fundamentally and fatally flawed. It believes

Iraqis will rally behind a strong central government that keeps the

country together and protects the rights of all citizens equally.

But there is no trust within the central government, trust of the

government by the people, and no capacity by the government to deliver

services and security. And there is no evidence that we can build that

trust and capacity soon.

Simply put, Iraq cannot be run from the center, absent a dictator or

foreign occupation. If we want the country to hold together and find

stability, we have to make federalism work. If we don't, there will be

no political accommodation at the center.

Violent resistance will increase. The sectarian cycle of revenge will

spiral out of control. The result will be at best the violent break up

of Iraq into multiple states--at worst the total fragmentation of the

country.

This resolution is part of a comprehensive strategy I have proposed

to bring our troops home, to leave behind a stable Iraq and to protect

our soldiers so long as a single one of them remains in Iraq.

I believe that is the best way to end the war in Iraq responsibly.