Madam President, this appropriations bill reported by

our Committee on Appropriations responds to the President's request for

supplemental funding for the Department of Defense and other

departments and agencies. The bill provides $121.6 billion in emergency

spending. Of this amount, $102.48 billion is provided to support Iraqi

security forces to continue operations in Afghanistan and to wage the

global war on terrorism. In testimony before our Appropriations

Subcommittee on Defense, we were told this funding is needed by the end

of April.

I am disappointed the bill contains language that sets forth a

timetable for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq. The language amounts

to a restatement of S.J. Res. 9, which a majority of Senators voted

against, 50 to 48, on March 15. The Senate has spoken on this issue.

Inclusion of this language as reported by the Appropriations Committee

last week will only slow down the bill and invite a Presidential veto.

We need to approve the funding now. Unnecessarily extending this debate

is not going to serve the national interests. I will offer an amendment

to strike this language from the bill.

In this bill, the Appropriations Committee also approved $14.8

billion for additional emergencies, including $7.9 billion for

continuing the recovery from Hurricane Katrina. The affected States are

making good progress, slow but steady and sure. But additional Federal

resources are needed. The bill also includes $1.7 billion for veterans

health care facilities, which signals the committee's continuing

interest in ensuring that our veterans receive the quality care they

deserve.

I applaud the chairman's goal, the distinguished Senator from West

Virginia, of completing work on the bill this week. I am concerned,

however, that the bill is almost $19 billion above the President's

request. We need to be sure this spending is necessary and responsible.

I look forward to working with my good friend from West Virginia to

ensure that this is the case. It is imperative that we provide funding

to our troops promptly, and it will remain my goal to put a bill on the

President's desk that he can sign.

Madam President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask that it be

reported.

Madam President, this is an amendment to the committee

substitute which is now at the desk. The amendment will strike part of

section 1315 of the bill titled ``Revision of United States Policy on

Iraq.'' The majority of section 1315 of this act is a restatement of

S.J. Res. 9, the United States Policy in Iraq Resolution of 2007.

Two weeks ago, the Senate voted against adopting S.J. Res. 9 by a

vote of 50 to 48. Section 1315 calls for a prompt transition of the

mission in Iraq to a limited mission; a phased redeployment of U.S.

forces from Iraq within 120 days of enactment of this act; a goal of

redeployment of all U.S. combat forces from Iraq by March 31, 2008,

except for a limited number essential for protecting U.S. and coalition

personnel and infrastructure, training, and equipping Iraqi forces, and

conducting targeted counterterrorism operations.

Section 1315 also calls for a classified campaign plan for Iraq,

including benchmarks and projected redeployment dates of U.S. forces

from Iraq. Finally, it also includes an expression of the sense of

Congress concerning benchmarks for the Government of Iraq, along with a

reporting requirement by the commander, multinational forces, Iraq,

which is currently General Petraeus, to detail the progress being made

by the Iraqi Government on the benchmarks contained in this section.

This amendment does not remove the sense-of-the-Congress provision

that is important to a number of Senators. I think all Senators share

an earnest desire that the Iraqi Government move aggressively to

undertake the measures necessary to ensure a stable and

free Iraq. The language to be removed by my amendment is essentially a

restatement of S.J. Res. 9, which, as I said, on March 15 Senators

defeated by a vote of 50 to 48.

Before announcing his new plan in Iraq, the President sought input

from his top military and civilian advisers, along with Members of

Congress, foreign leaders, and other military and foreign policy

experts. He acknowledged there was no easy solution to the situation in

Iraq and the Middle East, and he determined a temporary deployment of

additional U.S. troops in Iraq to support Iraqi security forces would

provide a new window of opportunity for Iraqi political and economic

initiatives to take hold and reduce sectarian violence. This plan

provides the best hope to bring stability to the country and to hasten

the day when our troops will come home.

Earlier this year the National Intelligence Estimate entitled

``Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead,'' was

delivered to the Congress. The National Intelligence Estimate

indicated--and I am quoting now from an unclassified version:

Which is 12 to 18 months--

It is clear to me that it is in our national interests to support the

President's new strategy, to help provide an opportunity for political

and economic solutions in Iraq, and for more effective diplomatic

efforts in the Middle East region. Of course, we know there are no

guarantees of success, but according to the National Intelligence

Estimate and the perspective of some of our most experienced foreign

policy experts, maintaining the current course or withdrawal without

additional stability in Iraq will be harmful to our national interests

and to the entire region.

We need to do what we can to help stabilize this situation and bring

our troops home. As a beginning point, for this strategy to work, we

should show a commitment to success. I support the new initiative and

urge the Senate to give it a chance to work. This does not mean we

should not monitor the situation or that the plan should not be

adjusted as new developments occur, but we need to let the forces move

forward to brighten the prospects of stabilizing Iraq and bringing our

troops home.

As Commander in Chief, the President needs our support. I support his

efforts and the efforts of our troops. The Senate should provide the

resources necessary to accomplish this mission, and these funds are

included in this bill. Troop levels and missions need to be left to

General Petraeus and his commanders who ought to have the flexibility

to react to the situation on the ground in determining how to deploy

troops as needed. Congress should not be tying the hands of our

commanders or limiting their flexibility to respond to the threats on

the battlefield.

The inclusion of unnecessarily restrictive language will ensure a

Presidential veto, we are advised. In testimony before the

Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, we were told that the funding

provided by this bill is needed by the end of April. We need to speed

this funding to our troops, rather than slow it down by returning to a

debate already settled by the Senate by a recorded vote.

Madam President, I urge the support of my amendment.