Madam President, I agree with the Senator from Arizona

that the consequences of playing politics with this important funding

for our troops is simply the wrong strategy; that what we have is a

game of chicken between the House of Representatives, which is larding

up a supplemental appropriations bill with a bunch of extraneous pork,

and the President, recognizing that there are nonsecurity provisions in

that supplemental appropriations, has said if that and the timetable

for withdrawal from Iraq is included as part of this emergency

supplemental, he will veto it. So this is a high-risk game of chicken,

with the impact of delaying passage of the supplemental being felt

directly by our troops on the ground, if that is in fact the result.

Last week, Secretary Gates made clear the consequences of not quickly

passing the supplemental funding necessary to support our troops. The

downstream effects will directly impact our soldiers, sailors, marines,

and airmen. By not moving expeditiously to pass a clean supplemental

bill that can pass the Senate and be signed by the President, the

majority risks extending the tours of our troops scheduled to come home

from Iraq and slowing the repair of equipment necessary to equip them,

as well as the training of Iraqi soldiers who are designed to replace

them.

Any delay in funding will not prevent a buildup of security forces in

Iraq but, instead, threaten to dramatically impact forces already on

the ground. Secretary Gates has said this kind of disruption to key

programs will have a genuinely adverse effect on the readiness of the

Army and the quality of life for soldiers and their families. So I

can't imagine why in the world our colleagues on the other side of the

aisle, the new majority, would want to risk that.

This supplemental is necessary to pay for training and equipping the

soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. If approved, the supplemental will

pay for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, repairing and

replacing equipment damaged or destroyed in combat, and new

technologies to protect U.S. service members. This last provision

includes a new generation of body armor, better armored vehicles, and

countermeasures against improvised explosive devices. IEDs have caused

about 70 percent of the casualties in Iraq. The supplemental also will

provide funding for training and equipping the Iraqi and Afghan

security forces.

If this supplemental appropriations bill is not passed by April 15,

the military will be forced to consider the following: curtailing and

suspending home station training for Reserve and Guard units; slowing

the training of units slated to deploy next to Iraq and Afghanistan;

cutting the funding for upgrading and renovating the barracks and other

facilities that support quality of life for our troops and their

families; and stopping the repair of equipment necessary to support

predeployment training. This is what Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

has said on March 22, 2007.

If the supplemental is not passed by May 15, the military will be

forced to consider the following: reducing the repair work done at Army

depots; delaying or curtailing the deployment of brigade combat teams

to their training rotations. This, in turn, will cause additional units

in theater to have their tours extended because other units are not

ready to take their place. Delaying the formation of new brigade combat

teams; implementation of civilian hiring freeze; prohibiting the

execution of new contracts and service orders, including service

contracts for training events and facilities; and, finally, holding or

canceling the order of repair parts to nondeployed units in the Army.

All of these, according to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, on

March 22, 2007.

When the new majority took over Congress, they promised change. In

fact, the first bill passed in the Senate was an ethics bill that, in

part, helped improve transparency in the way we spend taxpayers' money

in Washington. While that ethics bill remains in limbo, the 110th

Congress has returned to the tried-and-true technique of inserting

mystery earmarks that have nothing to do with funding our troops or

fighting the war on terror into a war supplemental bill.

During the election season, many on the other side called the 109th

Congress

the ``do-nothing'' Congress. The 110th Congress is quickly becoming the

``say anything and do-nothing Congress'' when it comes to fiscal

discipline. Last week, when the Senate debated the budget, the majority

spoke of the need for fiscal discipline, even as it passed the $700

billion tax hike for taxpayers over the next 5 years.

The chairman of the Senate Budget Committee was quoted as saying:

But governing takes more than simply passing a budget. Governing also

includes the discipline to live within a budget.

Unfortunately, both the Senate and the House failed in their first

test by including billions more in the war supplemental than the

President requested. As I mentioned, President Bush has already

threatened to veto the House bill; not all because of the timetable it

imposes for our troops' withdrawal from Iraq but also because the bill

is full of pork.

In today's edition of the Politico, they did a fine job of

identifying some of the most egregious examples of pork included in the

House bill. They highlighted $5 million for tropical fish breeders and

transporters for losses from a virus last year; $25 million for spinach

that growers and handlers were unable to market, up to 75 percent of

their losses; $60.4 million for the National Marine Fisheries Service

to be distributed among fishing communities, Indian tribes,

individuals, small businesses, including fishermen, fish processors,

and related businesses, and other persons for assistance to mitigate

the economic and other social effects by a commercial fishery failure.

It also includes $74 million for the payment of storage, handling,

and other associated costs for the 2007 crop of peanuts to ensure

proper storage of peanuts for which a loan is made, and the House bill

also includes $120 million for the shrimp and menhaden fishing

industries to cover consequences of Hurricane Katrina.

Now, I have to confess, even though I like to fish a little myself, I

had never even heard of menhaden, so I went on the Internet to

something called the Menhaden Fact Sheet. This is, if you will recall,

$120 million for the shrimp and menhaden fishing industries to cover

consequences of Hurricane Katrina. Well, as it turns out, according to

the Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia on the Internet, the menhaden are

fish of the--well, I can't even pronounce the Latin phrase, but they

are of the herring family.

It says here, describing this menhaden that the taxpayer is being

asked to pay $120 million in this emergency war supplemental: to

support the gulf menhaden and Atlantic menhaden which are characterized

by a series of smaller spots behind the main, humeral spot and larger

scales than yellowfin menhaden and finescale menhaden. In addition,

yellowfin menhaden tail rays are a bright yellow in contrast to those

of the Atlantic menhaden, which are grayish. Menhaden range in weight

up to 1 pound or more. At sea, schools of Atlantic menhaden may contain

millions of members. Common names for Atlantic menhaden are mossbunkers

and fatback. In Florida, yellowfin menhaden are called pogies, and are

the preferred species for use as strip bait.

This is important. It talks about the range, since this is supposedly

done as part of the Hurricane Katrina relief measure. It says gulf

menhaden range from the Yucatan Peninsula to Tampa Bay, FL, with

finescaled menhaden from the Yucatan to Louisiana--I guess we are

getting a little closer now to where Hurricane Katrina hit--yellowfin

menhaden from Louisiana to North Carolina, the Atlantic menhaden ranges

from Jupiter Inlet, FL, to Nova Scotia. The various species of menhaden

occur anywhere from estuarine waters outward to the Continental Shelf.

It says that menhaden are essentially filter feeders, straining

microscopic plankton, algae, et cetera, from the water they swim

through open-mouthed. Unlike mullet, they are not bottom feeders. Due

to their feeding habits, they must be caught by cast netting to be used

as live bait.

This is the most interesting part of the article. It says: menhaden

are not used for human consumption. Most recently, menhaden has begun

to be exploited as a source of omega-3 fatty acid fish oil for

commercial human consumption, further threatening menhaden populations.

I certainly don't know what the purpose is of this $120 million for

shrimp and the menhaden fishing industries, but I can't see in this

description, or anywhere else in this legislation, why this is an

emergency or why it ought to be included in an emergency war

supplemental. If anything, the inclusion of this kind of appropriation

in this emergency war supplemental in the House bill trivializes the

importance of providing the money that will help our troops deployed in

Afghanistan and Iraq in harm's way.

Here is what the Senate bill included: $24 million for funding of

sugar beets; $3 million funding for sugar cane, all of which goes to a

Hawaiian cooperative; $100 million for dairy product losses; an

additional $31 million for a 1-month extension of the Milk Income Loss

Contract Program; 13 million for Ewe Lamb Replacement and Retention

Program; $115 million for the conservation security program; $100

million for small agricultural dependent businesses; $13 million for

mine safety technology research; $50 million for fisheries disaster

mitigation fund.

There is so much pork included in this supplemental appropriations

bill, both in the House version and in the Senate proposal, that it

warranted a front-page story and editorial in USA Today. An editorial

in USA Today questioned:

The editorial went on to conclude:

In short, what we have is that my colleagues on the other side of the

aisle are willing to put money into pet projects--which may or may not

be worthy endeavors, we will never know--and yet are unwilling to

adequately fund the needs of our military. For all their talk of

earmark reform and transparency earlier this year, my colleagues seemed

to have forgotten all of that when they put together the supplemental

appropriations bill.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a

quorum.