Mr. President, this is a disappointing day for the

Senate and for the United States of America because the debate we

should be having on this floor, which is taking place around procedural

issues, should really be a debate about what is happening in Iraq and

the new direction we should be heading in Iraq.

It is disappointing as well that it has been postured somehow as a

political debate from the other side. The fact is that what happens in

Iraq today and what happens in Iraq in the months and years ahead is,

in fact, perhaps the most important issue we can face in the United

States of America and in the world, and it is important that this body,

elected by 300 million Americans in each of our respective States,

grapple with the fundamental defining issue of our time.

It is also important, as we grapple with this issue of the future of

Iraq and the involvement of the United States, that we try to move

forward in a manner that is bipartisan. At the end of the day, the only

way in which we are going to achieve stability in the Middle East and

we are going to bring our troops home--which I believe is a goal that

is shared by the 100 Members of this body--is if we develop a

bipartisan approach to getting it done. Yet, at the end of the day, we

can't even seem to get beyond a procedural obstacle to get to a debate

on the central issue that was presented by a bipartisan resolution, led

by some of the most distinguished Members of this Senate, including

Senator Warner, Senator Levin, and others. We cannot even get past the

procedural problem for us to end up having a discussion and a vote on

that very simple issue.

I ask our brethren on the other side that they join us in getting

through this procedural roadblock so that we can have an effective

debate and a vote on a question that is before us concerning the future

of Iraq and the President's plan on how we move forward.

I am disappointed as one Senator that today we are not on this floor

debating the alternative resolutions that were submitted in the last

week, which are bipartisan in nature, and then deciding how to move

forward as a Senate. I am very disappointed that we have not been able

to get there.

Let me also say that for those who have said the political posturing

is taking place on this side, I don't believe that is at all the case.

The fact is, what we have been trying to do on this side is to have an

open and honest debate, and again underscoring the reality that if we

are going to find our way out of the quagmire in which we find

ourselves in Iraq, it is going to take a true bipartisan effort to get

us to a place where we can say we have peace and stability in the

Middle East and we have brought our troops home. I hope as we move

forward in this discussion that we will be able to find some of that

bipartisan consensus.

At the end of the day, when we look at what is happening in Iraq, we

need to recognize the realities. We need to know and remember the 3,100

men and women who have given their lives on behalf of the mission the

President assigned to them in that country. We need to remember the

23,000 men and women in uniform who today are wounded and who are

carrying the scars of the war with them day by day and for many of them

for the rest of their lives. We need to remember the 137,000 men and

women who are on the ground in Iraq today. The bipartisan resolution we

put forward with Senator Warner, Senator Nelson, Senator Collins, and

others recognizes that. We recognize the bravery of the men and women

who have given so much of their time and their life in Iraq, and we

recognize the need for us to support our men and women on the ground in

Iraq.

But we also recognize that what the American people are asking us to

do is to chart a new direction for Iraq. I have heard some of my

colleagues on the other side--as there is criticism on this side--that

all we are doing is being critical and not offering alternatives. The

fact is that we are attempting to come up with a new direction in Iraq,

and that is what is embodied in the Warner-Levin resolution. It is, in

fact, a new direction and new strategy in Iraq.

Mr. President, I ask the Members of this body and I ask the people of

the United States of America to consider what are the options before

us. In my view, there are three options. There is plan A. Plan A is a

plan--which was put forth by the President after several months of

deliberation in which he concluded what we had to do in order to be

successful in Iraq--to send 21,500 additional troops. In real terms,

that is about 48,000 additional troops assigned, mostly in Baghdad.

Some people have called it an escalation. Some people have called it a

surge. That is the heart of the plan. It is a plan he announced in

early January, a plan he reiterated at the State of the Union, that we

assign 21,500 troops to Baghdad.

The question we all ought to be asking ourselves is whether that will

work. Will plan A work? I believe those who have studied the issue in

great depth would answer the question no--no, it will not work; no, it

will not work because Operation Going Forward in June of 2006, just 7

months ago, showed that it does not work. And when that didn't work, we

went in with a surge of some 7,000 troops in August in Operation Going

Forward Together No. 2, and again that did not work. If today we go in

with 21,500 additional troops, plus all the support for the troops that

is going to be necessary, what is going to be the result of that

endeavor? In my view, we have been there, we have done that, and it

hasn't worked. So we have to look forward to a new direction. So I

believe plan A, the President's plan, is not a plan that is going to

work.

Then there is plan B. Plan B is being advocated by many, including

some who have demonstrated in Washington and have called our offices

every day, and that is to just bring our troops home today; it is over;

it is a precipitous withdrawal; let's get out of there and get out of

there right now. The mistakes of the past have compounded the problems

in the Middle East and Iraq to the point that we can't put Humpty

Dumpty together. Not all the king's men or all the king's horses could

ever put Humpty Dumpty together again, some people would say, because

the problems in Iraq today are so severe.

I, as one Senator, reject plan B as well. I don't believe we can

afford to move forward with that kind of precipitous withdrawal.

There is plan C, and plan C is really the plan of trying to move

forward in a bipartisan way so that we can achieve success in Iraq--

success, again, being defined by stability in Iraq and in the region

and by bringing our troops home.

I know there are lots of people in this body who have much more

experience than I, and I know there are lots of people who have studied

this issue extensively over a very long period of time, and yet it is

amazing to me that when we have a group of people in a bipartisan way

coming forward with a new direction, we have the President and others

of the minority party essentially rejecting that plan of going forward

together in a new direction.

When I look at the Iraq study report and I look at names such as

former Secretary of State James Baker, former Attorney General Ed

Meese, former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, former U.S.

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former U.S. Senator Alan

Simpson, I see all of these Republicans who are saying we need a new

direction going forward together. I believe that is what we ought to be

doing, and I believe that new direction going forward together is what

is embodied in the bipartisan resolution which was put together by

Senator Warner, Senator Levin, and others. It is that kind of new

direction which we ought to be debating and discussing on the floor of

the Senate today.

When one looks at this group of elder statesmen, which includes not

only the Republicans whose names I mentioned, but they include esteemed

elder statesmen who are also Democrats, such as Lee Hamilton, Vernon

Jordan, Leon Panetta, William Perry, and Charles Robb, when we see

those kinds of elder statesmen who have taken a year to try to figure

out how we deal with this quagmire in Iraq, we have to say those

recommendations should be paid very serious attention. The

recommendations are many, but they are important because they show the

depth of thinking that commission went through in coming up with those

recommendations.

In essence, what that bipartisan group of elder statesmen said to the

people of America is that the way forward requires a new approach. The

way forward requires a new approach. They talk about the external

approach, which is to build an international consensus on how we move

forward in Iraq. They talk about a new diplomatic offensive which is

important if we are to succeed because there are too many nations in

that part of the world and around the world who have been sitting on

their hands letting America do it alone. They have to stop sitting on

their hands if ultimately we are going to achieve stability in the

Middle East.

They talk about the Iraq International Support Group, and that kind

of a group would be a group that would make sure the efforts on

reconstruction and building the peace and security in Iraq are, in

fact, successful. Where is that group? It hasn't been there. It has

been the United States alone moving forward on this effort. We need to

have the international community involved.

It talks about dealing with Iran and dealing with Syria. They are

part of that region, like it or not. This group of elder statesmen has

said we need to deal with those countries. We know the limitations. We

know the threats they also embody and present to the United States of

America, but we need to bring them into the dialog if ultimately we are

going to bring stability to that region.

The study group goes on with a whole host of other recommendations on

the internal approach, helping the Iraqis help themselves. It says that

we must require the Iraqis to have performance on milestones, that we

need to push them hard on national reconciliation, that we need to make

sure the Iraqi Government takes responsibility for security and for

their military forces, that they establish a functioning police force,

and that they establish a criminal justice system that does, in fact,

work. And the list goes on with 79 recommendations on the way forward,

a new approach.

That is what we ought to be talking about, Mr. President, on the

floor of the Senate today--how we move forward.

I look at this resolution which was put together by some of my

esteemed colleagues, of which I am a proud original cosponsor, and I

say at least we have tried on a bipartisan basis to figure out a

roadmap for how we ought to move forward together as Democrats and

Republicans, as Americans, on this issue, which is the defining issue

of our times. I see the names of people such as Senator Warner, I see

Senator Collins, I see Senator Levin, I see Senator Nelson of Nebraska,

and others who have been involved in this effort. What we are trying to

do as a group is to say we ought to figure out a way of charting a new

direction forward together, much like the elder statesmen did in coming

up with the Iraq Study Group recommendations. Yet we are being refused

the opportunity to even engage in a debate on a resolution that

essentially says this is a direction we propose to the President in how

we move forward together.

I hope that at the end of the day, with the discussions that are

going on between the leadership, we are able to come to some agreement.

I believe there is too much at stake. I believe there is too much at

stake not only in the Middle East, but there is too much at stake for

the United States of America and for the free world. At the end of the

day, it is going to take Republicans and Democrats working together to

try to chart this new and successful direction for how we move forward

in Iraq.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.