Mr. President, for the benefit of our colleagues, I will

summarize where we are this morning as well. The majority leader and

the Senator from Wisconsin offered a resolution, a piece of

legislation, and sought to proceed to consider it. Republicans agreed

to that. We voted last night to invoke cloture, which means we agreed

to proceed to the consideration of that resolution.

It has to do with developing a strategy to deal with al-Qaida. It is,

as the majority leader said, a debate worth having. As a result,

Republicans were happy to engage in that debate and we will throughout

the day.

After the period of morning business, we are back on the resolution.

I would urge my Republican colleagues to let us know, let the

leadership staff know, when they wish to be here to speak on the matter

so the schedules can be coordinated, that everyone can debate the issue

as they see fit, and that the minority and majority leader a little

later in the day can get together and decide when we might be able to

schedule the next vote based upon everyone's desire to speak. So if our

colleagues would let us know when they desire to come and make their

presentations, that would be very helpful.

I would like to correct one thing the majority leader said, in saying

Republicans think everything in Iraq is ``just fine.'' I know he did

not mean to suggest Republicans believe the situation in Iraq is ``just

fine.'' Because clearly it is not. If it were, we could bring our

troops home today.

Unfortunately, it is not ``just fine,'' although it is steadily

improving. And when it gets to the point when it is ``just fine,'' we

will be able then to bring the remainder of our troops home. The

primary difference between

the majority and minority is the majority would like to bring the

troops home right now. ``Enough is enough,'' says the majority leader.

The Republicans, on the other hand, believe we have to finish the

job. And while great progress has been made as a result of the surge

implemented by General Petraeus several months ago, the job is not

finished. And until the job is finished, there is a great danger that

were we to pull out prematurely, al-Qaida, not totally defeated, would

infiltrate right back in, reestablish its presence, begin the terrorism

which has taken us so many months now to repress, and that we would

have to then come right back in again, all at a greater cost than if we

simply see the job through right now.

It is possible every day to have a headline from a newspaper

revealing a suicide bomber attack or some other incident similar to

that in Iraq. That is the unfortunate reality. Everything is not yet

``just fine'' in Iraq. But it is also true that because the surge has

worked to essentially defeat al-Qaida, it has now resorted to the most

reprehensible tactics of all: using women, children, the disabled as

suicide bombers to go into places where those people are not suspects

and they can blow up innocent people in Iraq.

That is the situation we need to help stop, not turn our back and

walk away from. It is also true many Iraqis have now been trained by

our forces. That is the good news that will enable us eventually,

hopefully sooner rather than later, to withdraw our troops from Iraq.

We are withdrawing them now.

We will, by June as I recall, be down to a level that is very close

to the level that existed prior to the surge. We will be able to do

that because the surge has worked. What happens after that, we will

await a report from General Petraeus when he comes back to the Capitol

and briefs us on the situation in Iraq.

In the meantime, Ambassador Crocker and others have noted significant

progress on the political and diplomatic front as well as the economic

front in Iraq. The Parliament there is now engaging in vigorous debate,

passing resolutions. I note that one was vetoed yesterday. It kind of

reminds me of the process in Washington, where we do not always agree

on everything and we have a robust debate about it.

We should not be critical of the Iraqis because they cannot agree

always on everything, but we should continue to push them to move

forward with alacrity, so the things that need to be done politically

to enable us to eventually remove our troops can be done. I know we

all, Republicans and Democrats, share that goal.

So the bottom line is, we will continue this debate today. I would

conclude with this point: One of the important reasons for having this

debate today about a strategy for dealing with al-Qaida is because

there is a difference of opinion between the House of Representatives'

leadership and the Senate on this issue.

The Senate voted with 68 Senators, Democrats and Republicans, to

reinstitute FISA, the law that enables us to gather intelligence on

these terrorists abroad. That law had to be reauthorized because it

expired 6 months after we first passed it.

So we had to reauthorize it and make one additional change; that is,

to make sure the telecommunications companies that are cooperating with

us are protected from lawsuits that have been filed against them simply

for their participation with the U.S. Government in collecting this

foreign intelligence.

Without that liability protection, they are not likely to continue to

help us. So we made that change. It was recommended by the Intelligence

Committee on a vote of 13 to 2, a very bipartisan recommendation. The

Senate then passed it with 68 affirmative votes. It went to the House

of Representatives and there it sits. It sits without a law in force

today that enables us to begin new intelligence surveillance activities

against terrorists abroad.

This represents a deficiency in our intelligence gathering at a time

when as both Admiral McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence,

and Attorney General Mukasey have noted that we are losing intelligence

every day that would help us in the war against these terrorists.

Every day that goes past that we cannot intercept a communication

because the law has not been reauthorized is a day of lost

intelligence, intelligence we will never get back. The terrorists are

not going to make the phone call a second or third time to accommodate

us so we can finally collect the intelligence we need, so we can find

out who he is calling and what they are planning. We cannot do that.

So phone calls that occurred yesterday or the day before or the day

before that, they are gone, they are lost forever. It is critical we

reestablish this capability for collecting foreign intelligence on

terrorists.

The legislation passed by the Senate will do that. The President says

he will sign it into law, and it is critical that the House of

Representatives' leadership allow the House of Representatives to vote

on it. If they do, it will pass and it can be sent to the President and

it will be signed.

The reason, I gather, it has not been brought forth is because the

leadership of the House knows it will pass and, for whatever reason,

they do not want this Senate-passed bill to become law.

It is critical the Congress fulfill its responsibility to ensure that

our intelligence-gathering capabilities continue on. I would urge again

that the best strategy for dealing with al-Qaida starts with

authorizing the kind of intelligence collection that we understand is

critical to understanding al-Qaida's intentions and thus being able to

defeat them.

So in developing a strategy for al-Qaida, No. 1, the House of

Representatives' leadership should bring this legislation up for a

vote, allow those who support it to send it to the President for his

signature, and we can get on with this important collection.

I urge my colleagues to come to the floor and let us know when they

wish to speak so we can organize the debate today with an eye toward

the minority and majority leader being able to get together and work

out a time schedule that would be acceptable to all of us.