Mr. President, I listened with interest to my friend

from Kentucky comment about my statement on Iraq and the importance of

disengagement with the withdrawal of American troops. I don't intend to

restate my positions on the war this afternoon. I came to the floor to

address another issue. But I will point out that one of the best votes

I have cast in the Senate was in opposition to the resolution,

supported by the Senator from Kentucky, that took us into Iraq, where

American forces have been fighting for a longer time than all of World

War II and where we see the continued loss of American lives--some 37

American lives lost last month--and billions in taxpayer dollars

flooding into the sands of Iraq. Still, there is not the reconciliation

by the Iraqi political leadership to develop some kind of Government

that could be the basis for independence in the future. As our brave

men and women are fighting gallantly and with great valor there, they

are entitled to a policy that is worthy of their valor. Today they are

effectively being held hostage by Iraqi politicians who refuse to

negotiate among themselves and form a government. That might be

satisfactory to the Senator from Kentucky but not to the Senator from

Massachusetts. Evidently, the Senator from Kentucky wants to give a

blank check to the Iraqi politicians: Continue your squabbles over

there, while we continue to see the loss of American lives and blood.

Not the Senator from Massachusetts. They have had their time. What is

going to convince the Iraqi politicians we are serious? What will send

the message is when we demonstrate that we are starting to withdraw

American troops. Then they are going to make political judgments for

their survival.

But not today. If the Senator from Kentucky wants to continue an

open-ended commitment with American lives and American treasure, that

is his position. It is not mine. I don't think that is where the

American people are.

How long is it going to take for the Iraqi politicians to get

together? They are not doing it now. They didn't do it yesterday. They

don't appear to be willing to do it tomorrow, even though we have had

assurances from the administration that success was around the corner.

This is a matter of enormous importance and consequence. We will

continue the debate. That is why I am a strong supporter of what our

leader pointed out earlier today, talking about a proposal that has

been put forward in terms of what is called bridge funding.