Mr. President, I am pleased to join my two colleagues on

the Senate floor this evening in submitting a very important resolution

on what is perhaps the greatest challenge facing our country.

Let me first say it has been an honor and a privilege to work with

the distinguished Senator from Virginia, the former chairman of the

Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as my friend and colleague

from Nebraska, Senator Ben Nelson. We have worked very hard on this

resolution, spending many hours wordsmithing the language of it, trying

to get exactly the kind of serious policy statement we could bring

before our colleagues in the Senate.

I am very pleased that on the Republican side, we are joined by two

leaders on this issue, Senator Coleman and Senator Smith. They, too,

have had input to the resolution. That brings the number of us who are

joining tonight as original sponsors of our resolution to 10 Members of

the Senate. I would also note that based on conversations I have had

with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, there are several more

Senators who are very interested in our resolution and may well join in

cosponsoring it at a later date or certainly in voting for it.

Yesterday the Senate Armed Services Committee held a very useful

hearing on the nomination of an outstanding military officer, General

Petraeus, whom the President has tapped to lead our forces in Iraq.

Earlier today the Senate Armed Services Committee, I believe by

unanimous vote, voted to report this vital nomination to the full

Senate. General Petraeus is the ideal person to be taking over as

commander of our troops in Iraq. If anyone can make what I believe to

be a flawed strategy a success, it is he. But I had a very interesting

exchange with General Petraeus. I talked to him about my concern that

inserting more American troops into Iraq may well lessen the pressure

on Iraqi leaders to take the long overdue steps that are needed to

quell the sectarian violence.

I know the President believes the answer is more American troops,

that that will provide the Prime Minister and other leaders with the

space they need to take the reforms forward. I fear it is just the

opposite. I believe it lessens the pressure on the Iraqi leaders.

The distinguished Senator from Virginia is exactly

correct. That is indeed the testimony that was brought before our

committee a month ago. This was not ancient history. It was very

reasoned testimony and it could not have been clearer testimony.

Indeed, similar testimony was given by General Casey.

I asked General Petraeus if he felt we would be facing the widespread

and deteriorating sectarian violence that threatens the entire country,

but particularly the Baghdad region, if Iraqi leaders had amended their

Constitution, had passed an oil revenue law that more equitably

distributed oil proceeds among the groups in Iraq, if they had held

provincial elections, if they had more fully integrated the Sunni

minority into the Government power structures; would we be in the same

place today? And he told me he did not believe we would be. I think

that is significant, because I believe if Iraqi leaders had taken those

steps, we would not be facing the widespread sectarian violence that

has engulfed the Baghdad region.

I also talked to General Petraeus about a fascinating article he

wrote a year ago in which he outlined 14 observations that he had,

based on his previous tours in Iraq. The first and most important

observation in this article in ``Military Review'' that General

Petraeus had was to quote Lawrence of Arabia back in 1917, to say that

it was a mistake for us to do too much, whoever the foreign force is,

and that you had to let the Iraqis take the lead on these issues. Well,

those words, true in 1917, are just as true today, as General Petraeus

himself observed in this article.

The second observation in the same article, General Petraeus said an

army like ours in a land like Iraq has a half life as liberators, that

they are quickly seen as an army of occupiers. I believe that is what

has happened in Iraq and that confirms what my own observations were

during a trip a month ago to that land. Our delegation met with a

British commander in Basra who described to us a declining consent

line. He said at first when the British arrived in Basra, they were

greeted as liberators. But as time has gone by, their presence is more

and more resented and less and less tolerated.

The observations General Petraeus had in this article offer us good

guidance and, indeed, reflect in many ways the concepts we have worked

hard to include in this resolution.

There is one final point I want to make this evening. Some have said

if we pass this resolution, we show that America is somehow divided and

not supportive of our troops. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact is every Member of this body is united in support of our

troops. Every Member of this body wishes General Petraeus all the best

and hopes he will succeed in this very difficult mission. But the fact

is, Americans are deeply divided over the strategy we should pursue in

Iraq. It is part of the health of our American democracy that we debate

these issues, and we do so because we care about the brave men and

women in uniform who are representing us in Iraq, who are on the front

lines, who are sacrificing so much. That is exactly the motivation for

the resolution that the 10 of us are introducing tonight.

Let me close my remarks by again saying it has been a wonderful

experience to work so closely with the senior Senator from Virginia and

the Senator from Nebraska, Mr. Ben Nelson. Both of them have worked so

hard. They care so much about this issue. It has been a great pleasure

to join with them.

I thank the Chair.