Mr. President, let me first say I am pleased and honored

to be here with Senator Warner and Senator Collins and Senator Nelson.

It was about a year or so ago that Senator Levin and Senator Warner led

a CODEL of Senators into Iraq and Afghanistan. I had the great fortune

of traveling with both Senator Warner and Senator Levin on that CODEL.

I learned a tremendous amount from them in terms of what it is they had

seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, the observations they made about where we

were on the levels of violence in Iraq. I came away from that CODEL

with them feeling as if they truly had the best interests of America at

heart. As they have sponsored these resolutions today, what they are

acting out here is in the best fashion of what a Senator should do, and

that is trying to do the best for our country.

Let me say, first of all, with respect to the resolution that was

heard earlier today in the Foreign Relations Committee, sponsored by

Senator Levin and Senator Biden and Senator Hagel, I very much

appreciate their leadership and thinking and the passion they brought

to the debate and to this issue.

When I sat down and compared the resolution considered in the Foreign

Relations Committee to the resolution that is now being introduced by

Senator Warner and other colleagues, I thought there were a great

number of similarities between the two resolutions.

Let me just comment about my own involvement and give part of my

rationale for becoming an original sponsor of this resolution. First

and foremost, I think what this country needs today more than anything

else is a sense of unity. I think we have had a great deal of

divisiveness in this country over the last 6 years. I think in the long

run, when one looks 10, 20, 30, 40 years down the road at these very

difficult times that are very challenging to our country--very

challenging to our men and women in uniform and the other men and women

of America--we will be judged as to whether we in this Congress were

able to unify a direction in Iraq that ultimately was a successful

direction in Iraq.

I have called for a new direction in Iraq because I believe we need

that to get us to success there. I don't believe we can get to success

in Iraq if we have a divided country in terms of how we move forward.

With respect to the resolution that is before us, in my own

conversations with the President and with members of his administration

in the past, I have told them that, in my view, with all due respect to

our Commander in Chief, we need to move forward in a new direction.

When I returned from Iraq and Afghanistan with the Levin-Warner

codel, one of the things I told the President we needed to do was to

enhance our diplomatic efforts in the region; that the countries in the

area have as much, if not more, at stake than the United States. I saw

them doing very little.

Today, I see Saudi Arabia, with all its wealth, doing very little to

help in the reconstruction of Iraq. The same thing could be said about

Kuwait and many of the neighboring countries. That effort has to be

enhanced because they simply, in my judgment, are not doing their part

to contribute to a successful outcome in that region.

I have also spoken to the President and members of his administration

about the importance of the effort of reconstruction and making sure

that there are other countries besides the United States putting their

shoulder to the wheel on the reconstruction efforts that are underway

in Iraq.

The way I see this debate unfolding is that we essentially have the

plan of the President, which I call plan A. His plan is that we do a

lot of what we have been doing but, in addition, that we move forward

and add an additional 21,500 troops to the war effort in Iraq. That

would be what I call plan A. There is another plan out there, plan B,

from some Members of Congress and others that say we ought to bring our

troops home and bring our troops home right away; that we ought to

engage in an immediate withdrawal from Iraq and from that region. My

own view of that plan, plan B, is that is not a good plan either. At

the end of the day, no matter what criticisms we make about the

original decision to invade Iraq, about the way the war has been

mishandled, the fact is we are in Iraq today; there is a mess in Iraq

and in the Middle East. So the question for me becomes: How do we as

the United States of America, working in the Senate, working in the

House of Representatives, working with the President, how do we put

Humpty-Dumpty together again? It seems to me that Humpty-Dumpty has

fallen off the wall, and it is up to us to try to figure out, in some

united way, under difficult circumstances, how to move forward together

to create the unity that will allow us to succeed in Iraq.

When I look at the possibility of plan B, which is a precipitous

withdrawal from Iraq, it seems to me that will create tremendous

dangers not only to the Middle East but to the long-term interests of

the United States. I, for one, want us very much to succeed in Iraq

and, because I want to succeed, I want to see whether we can create a

kind of unity on how we move forward.

I think this resolution introduced by the senior Senator from

Virginia, the Senator from Nebraska, and the Senator from Maine is a

good direction for us to go in. I want to point out what I consider to

be four central points of this resolution which, in my view, are also

reflected in the Biden-Levin-Hagel resolution. The first of those

points is that there is a disagreement with the President's decision to

move forward with a surge of 21,500 more troops. I think both

resolutions say that equally and clearly. Why, in this resolution, is

that conclusion reached? Why was it reached in the other resolution

heard in the Foreign Relations Committee?

In my view, it is because of what our military commanders have said.

General Abizaid said it a few weeks ago, in November. He said an

increase in troops was not the way to go because it sends the wrong

signal about the ultimate responsibility to quell the sectarian

violence in Iraq. It is not the right way to go because when you look

at what happened with the surges we have had over the last 6, 7 months

in Iraq, they themselves did not work. When operations going forward

started in June, there was a sense that it might quell some of the

sectarian violence going on. It didn't work. We came back in August and

did another operation going forward. It did not work.

The Iraq bipartisan study commission, chaired by former Secretary

Baker and Lee Hamilton, found, in fact, that those surges created an

escalation of violence by 43 percent during that time period. In a

matter of 6 months we saw a 43-percent escalation of violence there.

Regarding putting more troops in, it seems we have the laboratory of

experience where it hasn't worked in the past, and there is nothing I

have seen that indicates that moving forward in that direction will

work at this time. I agree with the resolution and making a statement

that we disagree with the President's decision moving forward in that

regard.

As to the second part of this resolution, also reflected in the

alternative resolution in the Foreign Relations Committee, I think

there is unanimity of opinion. I bet you that we can get 100 Senators

to vote for the position that the Iraqi Government needs to assume

responsibility for a functioning government that will provide security

to the Iraqi nation and to the people of Iraq.

When Senator Warner and I visited Iraq with Senator Levin, I still

remember meeting with the Iraqi Ministers and with our own forces

responsible for helping with the training of the Iraqi police. Mr.

President, 2006 was supposed to be the year of the police in Iraq. This

is the year where the Iraqi security was supposed to be taken to the

point where they could move forward and assume the responsibility for

their own security. Yet that handoff hasn't occurred and the sectarian

violence has continued to increase.

I very much agree with the spirit of both resolutions that says if we

are going to move forward and be successful on this issue, it is the

Iraqi Government and people who need to move forward and assume

responsibility for their security.

The third thing in this resolution that I think is important is that

we contemplate that there is going to be some continuing involvement of

the United States in Iraq, without limitation. Nobody knows for how

long. But our efforts to engage in counterterrorism in that area will

be a continuing and important role of the United States of America. Our

efforts to attempt to restore the territorial integrity of Iraq and to

stop the weapons flowing into Iraq from Iran and Syria are important

measures that I believe the U.S. military can address. I agree with

those aspects of the resolution as well.

Finally, as I said earlier in my comments, at the end of the day,

this is not a United States of America problem alone. When one looks at

the Gulf States and other countries in that area, such as Egypt, there

is a huge problem that belongs to them as well. We have our hands on

the tar baby as the United States of America. They, too, as countries

have a huge stake in the success of Iraq and also have to get their

hands on the tar baby. I believe the resolution put forward by Senator

Levin and my other colleagues is a step in the right direction in that

it creates a framework for how we ought to be moving forward in Iraq.

In conclusion, again, I say how much I respect the senior Senator

from Virginia. I remember well the work that we did just a year or so

ago in the so-called Gang of 14. I see that Senator Nelson and Senator

Collins and Senator Warner are back again trying to pull the Members of

this body together on what is a very contentious issue. I wish them

well, and I am delighted to be part of the effort.

I yield the floor.