Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Kansas for yielding and

commend him on an incredibly eloquent and insightful explanation of the

events of the day, why what we are doing in Iraq is so important. He is

someone who has 10 years of experience on the Armed Services Committee.

Has served as chairman of the Intelligence Committee. He has a great

depth of knowledge when it comes to national security matters, foreign

policy, and particularly with respect to the current debate about the

Middle East. So I thank him for his great comments.

I just want to point out that with respect to this debate, I had

watched, as everyone else did, I think, yesterday what unfolded on the

floor. I believe what happened in the last 24 hours has demonstrated

what a charade this whole Iraqi resolution process has been.

This is serious business. This is the most serious business we will

deal with in the Senate. Young Americans are fighting and dying in

Iraq. I would say, having been to Iraq on three different occasions--

most recently about 6 weeks ago--things in Baghdad are not going well.

There are other parts of Iraq where we have made much better progress,

even in some parts of western Iraq where we have gotten some buy-in

from some of the local sheiks who have decided to participate in the

democratic process and support the effort to provide security in that

region of Iraq. But the fact is, things in Baghdad are not good.

What that has prompted is a change in strategy. We have undertaken a

new strategy. That strategy, of course, is something where the

Democrats in the Senate--less Senator Lieberman--and a handful of

Republicans have decided to put together a resolution to oppose. That

resolution, in my view, is an absolutely wrong way to approach what we

are trying to accomplish in Iraq today, but it is obviously their

prerogative to be able to do that. I think they ought to get a vote on

it. I will not vote with them. I disagree, as I said, intensely with

that resolution and its message. I know many of my colleagues on the

other side intend that message to be different than it is perceived by

our troops and by our enemies, but I think what we have to contend with

here when we send a message like that is, how is that perceived by

those audiences that are going to be impacted by it and, namely, our

troops, the young men and women who wear the uniform, and, of course,

obviously, the enemy they are trying to fight? It is the absolute wrong

message to send at the very time our troops are embarking on a new

mission.

This may be our last shot at success in Iraq. We have a new

commander, GEN David Petraeus, whom my colleague from Kansas just

mentioned. We have new rules of engagement on the ground in Baghdad,

and we have new conditions for the Iraqis to meet. They have to take on

the militias. There are military benchmarks they have to meet. There

are economic benchmarks. They have to figure out a way to divide the

oil revenues. They have agreed to invest $10 billion in infrastructure.

There are political benchmarks they have to meet, holding provincial

elections.

There have been resolutions offered on the floor that address those

benchmarks but at the same time express support for this mission.

Everyone agrees on the consequences of failure. As, again, my colleague

from Kansas so very eloquently pointed out, it would be a humanitarian

disaster in Iraq--possible genocide, possible full-blown civil war at a

minimum regional instability, Shiite versus Shiite, Sunni versus

Shiite; an increase in Iranian power on the Arabian peninsula. I do not

know if this new strategy is going to work, but I do know this: We owe

it to those who have sacrificed so much to achieve success in that

mission already to make sure we give this strategy an opportunity to

work.

I mentioned yesterday that I attended a couple of National Guard

welcoming-home ceremonies over the weekend in my home State of South

Dakota, one of which was Charlie Battery, a unit which was deployed to

Iraq for over a year and a unit which was hit incredibly hard. They

were in a very dangerous area in Baghdad going about the mission of

trying to train the Iraqi security police in that area. Because of some

IEDs, we lost four of those young men. And their families--as I visit

with them--cannot help but show the pain they are experiencing and yet

the incredible sense of loyalty and duty they feel to their country and

to the missions and what we are trying to accomplish in Iraq. Two

others of those were soldiers, one seriously injured, another also

injured, both recovering from those injuries. But the point, very

simply, is there is a cost to what we are trying to accomplish in Iraq.

Many of our troops have already borne that cost. The point, very

simply, is their sacrifice should not be in vain.

The troops we are sending now into this region are going whether we

like it or not and irrespective of what the Senate does. The Senate

will be sending them a vote of no confidence if we adopt a resolution

saying: We support you, but we do not believe you can achieve victory,

we do not believe you can accomplish your mission there in Iraq, we do

not believe you can win.

On the substance, that resolution is a bad idea, but, more

importantly, it seems to me it was designed more as a political

statement. That came into full view yesterday when the Republican

leader gave the Democratic leader exactly what they had wanted, which

was a debate here on the floor of the Senate on two resolutions. We

insisted on more resolutions. As my colleague from Kansas said, we

wanted to have a debate on the Warner resolution, on the McCain

resolution, on the Gregg resolution, even on the Feingold resolution.

As I said, we could all decide how we are going to vote, but we would

enter into that debate. And there ought to be, if there is going to be

a debate in the Senate, a full debate. But, frankly, the Democrats

objected to even debating two resolutions, the Warner resolution and

the alternative Gregg resolution, because that would have forced them

to vote on funding, a vote they did not want to have.

The American people deserve a full debate, not a one-sided debate,

not a debate in which one side dictates the terms. This ought to be a

debate about the full range of options that are available, the full

views of the Members of this body who represent their constituencies

across this country.

I heard one of my colleagues say--last week, I think it was, on the

Democratic side--they wanted a full-throated debate. Well, we saw what

a hoax that was yesterday. The agenda was exposed, and the charade

about a full-throated debate came to a crashing halt.

The American people and the Members of this body deserve a debate.

This is the most important issue of our time. As I said earlier, young

Americans are fighting and dying in Iraq. But if we are going to debate

this issue in the Senate, let's make this debate about substance, not

about political statements. Let's make sure all the views in this body

are heard.

We tried to do that yesterday by essentially agreeing to what the

Democratic leadership had asked for; that is, two resolutions, the

Warner resolution, which I happen to disagree with and would vote

against, and an alternative resolution that would address the issue of

funding. The Democrats objected to that. I hope that if this issue

reemerges on the floor of the Senate that it not be a one-sided debate,

it be a full debate, so the American people and those families who have

sacrificed so much for this cause get the debate they deserve and an

opportunity to have their views heard on the floor of the Senate.

Mr. President, I thank you and yield back the remainder of my time.