Mr. President, yesterday's testimony before the Senate

Armed Services Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee afforded

General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker the opportunity to address the

two central questions of the war in Iraq. No. 1: Has the troop surge

brought us closer to the day when our troops can come home? Second, is

the war in Iraq making America safer? By all accounts, the answer to

both questions is no.

While General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker both deserve our

gratitude for their hard work--and this is hard work under

extraordinarily difficult circumstances--their testimony gave our

country no reason to believe the strategy will change. President Bush

himself described the purpose of the surge as giving the Iraqi

Government and its people the space to achieve reconciliation. Recent

violence and the intensifying struggle between al-Maliki and al-Sadr

proved beyond any doubt the window we provided may be closing.

President Bush clings to his talking points that the surge is

working, but he called his plan a return on success, meaning that if

the surge worked, our troops could return home. If we have the success

he claims, where is the return?

Since Monday, we have had 12 American soldiers killed in Iraq. We are

stuck in the ``Twilight Zone'' in Iraq. When violence is up, the

President says we can't bring our troops home. When violence is down,

the President says we can't bring our troops home.

So it is long past time for the President to be honest with the

American people: Under what circumstances

could our troops come home? Under what scenario could this war end?

Based on everything we have heard, we can reach only one conclusion

with 160,000 courageous American troops serving in Iraq. President Bush

has an exit strategy for one person--and that is himself--on January 20

of next year.

Here is what three Senators had to say during yesterday's hearings.

One Senator said:

Another Senator said:

A third Senator said:

All three of these questions were from Republican Senators yesterday.

To my Republican friends I say: Let's work together. We had the

opportunity to change course in Iraq last summer, but Republicans who

were willing to criticize the war proved unwilling to break with

President Bush by voting against it. But it is not too late. Neither

side is looking for a hasty withdrawal that would put our troops or the

Iraqi people at undue risk. We want a smarter, more sustainable

strategy that addresses all the national security challenges our Nation

faces--from Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida safe haven in Pakistan, to

winning the peace in Afghanistan, to rebuilding full combat readiness

of our ground forces.

If we work together, Democrats and Republicans, we can set a new

course that takes us responsibly out of Iraq and would focus on the

global challenges that have gone overlooked for far too long.