Mr. President, this morning and in the days leading up to

today, we have seen and heard a great deal of discussion, particularly

by the media, describing the issue of the President's speech tomorrow

evening and all of the discussion in the political system as a

political tug of war about Iraq. It is not that. This is not a

political tug of war. It is a serious moment for this country to try to

evaluate what to do about something that overlays almost everything

else we are considering these days; that is, the current war in Iraq.

What do we do about what is happening there? It is about the lives of

our soldiers. It is about our country's future. It is about how to make

change in Iraq, how to create the kind of change that will give us the

opportunity to do the right thing.

I intend to listen carefully to what the President says in his speech

to the nation tomorrow night. I am not going to prejudge what he says,

but let me suggest what I think the President has to answer for us, for

me, for the American people.

There is considerable discussion about the fact that the President

will likely call for a surge or an increase in American troops going to

Iraq. There is also discussion that perhaps he will call for additional

funds that would be sent to Iraq for reconstruction or other things

Americans would contribute.

One point the President will have to explain is the testimony that

was given less than 2 months ago before the Senate by General Abizaid,

the top military commander in Iraq. I am talking about the top military

commander of American troops in Iraq. Here is what General Abizaid said

in November, less than 2 months ago. He said:

This is testimony before a congressional committee of the top U.S.

military commander in Iraq saying he has asked all of his top

commanders, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it

add considerably to our

ability to achieve success in Iraq. He said:

That is something I believe has to be reconciled. Has that changed?

Has something changed in 2 months?

With respect to the amount of money that is sent to the country of

Iraq, I observe this: This country has spent hundreds of billions of

dollars on the Iraq war. Between Iraq and Afghanistan, we are now

approaching $400 billion. We appropriated separately roughly a $20

billion pot of money for reconstruction in Iraq. That is in addition to

the reconstruction which has been done by American soldiers. That $20-

plus billion was pushed out the door--a massive amount of money--in a

short time.

I held a good number of hearings as chairman of the Democratic Policy

Committee on that issue: contracting in Iraq. I think it is the most

significant amount of waste, fraud, and abuse this country has ever

seen. Let me show one poster that describes a part of it, which was

shown at our hearing and we discussed this:

A company called the Parsons Corporation got this money. They were to

rehabilitate, I believe, 142 health clinics in the country of Iraq.

Twenty were done, and the rest didn't happen at all. The money was

spent. All the money is gone. The American taxpayers found that all

their money was gone, but the fact is that the health clinics were not

rehabilitated.

There was a doctor, a physician from Iraq, who testified. He said: I

went to the Health Minister of the new Government of Iraq. I said: I

want to see these health clinics that were supposed to have been

rehabilitated for which some $200 million was appropriated by the U.S.

taxpayers, by the U.S. Government. I want to see these health clinics.

He said the Health Minister of the new Government of Iraq said: You

don't understand, they don't exist. They are imaginary clinics.

Well, our money is gone. This is an example of the waste, fraud, and

abuse in contracting.

The Halliburton corporation, Custer Battles corporation--it is

unbelievable--the stories. This photo shows some American officials

with $100 bills wrapped in Saran Wrap the size of a big brick. This

fellow testified at a hearing I held, this man in the white shirt. He

said: Look, we told contractors in Iraq: Bring a bag, we pay cash. He

said it was like the Wild West: Bring a sack, we pay cash.

This $2 million in $100 dollar bills wrapped in Saran Wrap actually

went to Custer Battles corporation. Custer Battles corporation got over

$100 million in contracts. Among other things, it is alleged they took

forklift trucks from the Baghdad Airport, took them over to a

warehouse, repainted them, and then sold them to the Coalition

Provisional Authority, which was us. It is a criminal action at this

point.

My point is this: Whatever we do in Iraq, I want to be effective. We

owe it to the troops, we owe it to the men and women who wear America's

uniform.

At this point, we have America's troops in the middle of a civil war.

Yes, most of this is sectarian violence. We see the reports. January 7:

30 dead in Baghdad, bodies hang from lampposts. The Government said

Saturday that 72 bodies were recovered around the city, most showing

signs of torture. We see these day after day after day. Our heart

breaks for the innocent victims of this war. The question for us now

is, Should American troops be in the middle of that civil war? Should

we send additional troops to that circumstance? If so, for what

purpose? And if so, why do we do it less than 2 months after General

Abizaid said the commanders do not believe additional troops will be

effective?

We have done what is called a surge in Baghdad starting last July. I

believe it was somewhere around 15,000 additional troops were sent to

Baghdad. The fact is, the violence increased, more soldiers died.

I am going to listen to President Bush's speech. This ought not and I

hope will not and should not be political. It is about all of us,

Republicans and Democrats, the President and the Congress working

together to find a way for the right solution for this country to

support our soldiers, make the right judgments for them, make the right

judgments for our country's long-term interests.

Yes, we have a fight against terrorism that we must wage, and we must

do it aggressively, but most of what is going on in Iraq at this point

is sectarian violence, and it is, in fact, a civil war. The question

is, What do we do now?

It seems to me that if we are going to keep American troops in Iraq

for any length of time, we ought to consider partitioning so at least

we separate the combatants and the sectarian violence. It only seems to

me, in a civil war, that works. But I will listen intently tomorrow

with my colleagues to hear what the President's new plan is. I hope we

can work together in a way that begins to do what is in the best

interest of this country. I am very skeptical about this issue of

deciding that we are going to surge additional troops into Iraq, even

as the top military commanders in Iraq say that should not be done.

I mentioned Iraq first because it overwhelms most of the other agenda

here, but there are so many other issues with which we must deal. Let's

deal with Iraq and get that right, support our troops, do what is

necessary, do what is best for our country. Let's work together,

Republicans and Democrats, let's work together, the President and the

Congress, and find the right solution and do what is right for our

future. Then let's turn to other issues.

How about energy? It is interesting, we are held hostage by foreign

oil. Over 60 percent of the oil that runs the American economy comes

from off our shores. When we talk about energy independence, we need

energy independence, and I support fossil fuels. We are going to use

oil, coal, and natural gas. We always have and we always will, and I

support that. But let me say this: In 1916, this Congress put in place

tax incentives for the production of oil, long-term, robust, permanent

tax incentives to incentivize the additional production of oil.

Think how different it is with what we have done with renewable

energy. We decided about 20 years ago to give some tax incentives to

incentivize renewable energy development, but they were temporary,

short term. The production tax credit for the production of wind and

other renewable energy has been extended five times because it has been

short term. It has been allowed to expire three times. That is not a

commitment to this country. This is not a commitment to renewable

energy. This is not a commitment to energy independence. The fact is,

we are just babystepping our away along in all these areas. We didn't

do that with oil. We made a robust, long-term commitment in 1916, and

it remains today, that said: Let's produce. How about doing the same

thing for renewable energy? Yes, the biofuels, but also wind energy and

hydrogen fuel cells and all the other ways that can make us more secure

from an energy standpoint. Let's stop babystepping. Let's have a 10-

year plan. We cannot do this with a 1-year plan or a 2-year plan. We

need to deal with that issue.

We need to deal with the issue of health care costs. I wanted to, but

I don't have the time this morning, to respond to my colleague from

Iowa who twice has come to the floor to talk about why our Government

shouldn't be allowed to negotiate drug prices in the Medicare Program.

It is preposterous that we have a provision in law that prevents the

Federal Government from negotiating lower drug prices, especially

because our consumers in this country pay the highest prices for

prescription drugs in the world, and that is unfair. I relish that

debate, and I wait for that debate.

Jobs and trade--the fact is, we have lots of issues we need to sink

our teeth into. I am going to come back and speak about many of these

issues at great length. First, we have to deal with this situation in

Iraq. That is very important. That is about the lives of men and women

who wear America's uniform. But it is more than that as well. It is

about what we are doing around the world. It is about, yes, our lives

and our treasure, and we need to get that right.

I mentioned when I started that I think the press, if one listens to

all the

programs, tend to portray this as a political tug of war. It is deadly

serious, much more serious than a political tug of war. It is about

trying to get this right for our country's future.

I hope that in the coming several weeks, we can come to a conclusion

about this very important issue--yes, the war in Iraq, the larger war

on terrorism, deal with some of these issues, such as homeland

security--and then move on to begin to address the issues I just talked

about as well; that is, the issue of energy security, health care

costs, jobs, trade, and a series of issues that are important for this

country's future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.