Mr. President, I appreciate being recognized. Before my

good friend, Senator Lieberman, departs the floor, I will make one

observation about him that I think needs to be said. This winning/

losing is a big part of wars; it is a big part of politics. Everybody

wants to win, and people are afraid to lose. But I have found in life

there are some things that are worth fighting for and willing to lose

your job over, and to me the policies in Iraq fall into that category

because it is much more important in my election that we get it right

in Iraq, and from Senator Lieberman's point of view--I don't think I

have seen in modern politics anyone more committed to their beliefs

than Senator Lieberman when it comes to a foreign policy issue like

Iraq. We all know the story of his last election, how he basically lost

a primary because he refused to give in to the forces on the left when

it came to the war on terror policies, particularly

Iraq. He literally risked losing his job, lost the primary, and in the

end prevailed. I think he prevailed because the good people of

Connecticut saw in Senator Lieberman a man committed to his ideas, and

his ideas he was committed to were bigger than himself. They may not

have agreed with Senator Lieberman about his policies on Iraq, but they

sure admired what they saw in the man, and that is someone who was

clearly putting the country's interests ahead of their own. There is

not enough of that. The only group I can say with certainty that is

doing the same thing is the men and women in Iraq.

On the Fourth of July this year, last week, I was in Iraq, in Baghdad

for my sixth or seventh visit. This was a special visit. I got to be on

the ground in Iraq on the Fourth of July, our Independence Day, and be

part of a ceremony put on by General Petraeus's staff where he had 580-

plus people reenlist. It was the largest reenlistment ceremony in a war

zone in history, General Petraeus said. Right after the reenlistment

ceremony, we had 160-plus American soldiers who became naturalized

citizens. It was something to behold. To be in that former Saddam

palace and be around those brave young men and women who are signing up

to do it in Iraq yet again and who are becoming American citizens,

literally risking their lives to do so, was inspiring.

This debate we are about to enter into is not about anyone's

patriotism. My colleagues here, we are friends politically one day and

we are on the other side the next. That is the nature of politics. It

is never about respect for the person. I do have respect for my

colleagues, and I hope the same is said of me. It is about our

judgment. When I question your judgment and you question mine, that is

part of the political process. Our judgments need to be tested. The

decision we make now affects many people. It affects the long-term

future of our country. It affects the soldiers in harm's way. Our

judgment will be tested by the next election, and it will be tested by

the eyes of history.

So here is what I believe we need to do in terms of Iraq policy for

the immediate future. We need to listen very closely to what is being

said in theater by our generals and by our enemy. Mr. Zawahiri, the

second in command of al-Qaida, is not in Iraq, but he issued a

statement--I think it was last Thursday--it was about an hour-long

statement, and it was basically a call to not lose hope for al-Qaida in

Iraq. He was acknowledging that you are under strain and stress, that

you are really being pounded, but hang in there because your cause is

great, and he encouraged everyone who is sympathetic to al-Qaida to run

to Iraq now to beat us because our ideas are just abhorrent to their

way of life.

The idea of being tolerant to different religions and views of

religion is an absolute mortal sin in the eyes of al-Qaida. The idea of

a woman having a say about her child is something they are just not

going to have any part of. So I thought it was odd that he would make

this hour-long call for reinforcements. Why was he doing that?

The reason he chose to make that statement is because the new

strategy being employed now in Iraq is working against al-Qaida. I

don't want to overstate it. The main reason al-Qaida is losing ground

in Iraq has more to do about them than us. Al-Qaida dramatically

overplayed their hand. Wherever they occupied a region in the Sunni

part of Iraq, they tremendously overplayed their hand. During this

debate, I will give some illustrations of some of the brutal, vicious

things they did to folks living in Iraq once they were under al-Qaida

control, and the Sunnis in Iraq basically are fed up with al-Qaida.

They have had a taste of what al-Qaida offers them, and they have said

no thanks. They have rejected al-Qaida's view of how to live one's life

and how to raise one's children.

Lucky for us the President made a change in strategy--which should

have happened years ago--where we are putting additional combat

capability into the Iraqi theater. This rejection of al-Qaida by the

Sunni leadership and the Sunni population came at a time where we have

additional combat capability to reinforce that rejection. No matter

what you think about the surge, it is undeniable that there have been

new alliances formed between Sunni Iraqis and coalition forces in areas

previously controlled by al-Qaida; and al-Qaida, as Senator Lieberman

said, is literally on the run, but they are still engaging in suicide

bombing attacks and trying to create as much carnage as possible in

Iraq. Where they used to exist in Anbar, they exist no longer in any

force. They are isolated now. Anbar, the province dominated by the

Sunni Iraqis, is a transformed region in terms of al-Qaida operations.

The break of the sheik from the al-Qaida leadership and joining with

the coalition forces has been a transforming event.

What can al-Qaida do? They moved to Diyala when the population sided

with us, and their safe haven was denied. They went to the Diyala

Province. We are doing the same thing there as we did in Anbar: making

alliances with local Sunni leaders and some Shia. The big loser is al-

Qaida. That is why last week Zawahiri made a call to his brothers in

arms: Don't leave the fight; too much is at risk; hang in there, we

will send reinforcements if we can.

He made this observation--I will get the quote later in the debate.

He said the winds were blowing in our favor in Washington.

Now, one of the highest ranking al-Qaida leaders in the world was

trying to inspire his troops by saying: No matter how much you are

losing ground in Iraq, help may be coming from Washington. The question

for this body is, do we want to be the cavalry for al-Qaida? If things

are left the way they are now, and we gave General Petraeus the time

and the resources and our total commitment, there is no doubt in my

mind that, militarily, we can destroy al-Qaida in Iraq. Why? Because

the Iraqi people, particularly the Sunnis, have had a taste of that

lifestyle, and they have said no. All they need is additional capacity

to defeat al-Qaida. That additional capacity has been provided by the

surge. The additional military capability that exists now has made a

world of difference. The strategy is fundamentally different.

Before, for almost 4 years, we had been behind walls trying to train

the Iraqi Army and police, and getting in firefights and coming back

when it was over. General Petraeus, with additional military personnel,

has created joint security stations all over neighborhoods where we are

living with the Iraqi Army and police, training them day in and day

out. We are sleeping with them in terms of staying overnight, and we

are stakeholders of that area. Not only are we helping clear the area,

we are holding that area and we are having more combat capability. The

surge provides that for every combat troop available to do operations

before the surge, we have an additional soldier now. That has allowed

us to go into areas that we previously could not go into to clear,

hold, stay, and live with the Iraqi Army and police force and train

them day in and day out. It is truly working.

It is my hope that as we get into this debate we will understand that

if we go back to the old strategy of withdrawing behind walls, the

alliances that have been formed between the Sunni leadership in Iraq

and the coalition forces and the central government will be destroyed.

We have put tanks around Sunni sheiks' homes. We have created joint

security stations in neighborhoods that have previously been occupied

by al-Qaida. It is working. If we withdraw, all of those people who

formed these alliances will be at risk. I think al-Qaida will emerge

again stronger.

One thing is clear to me. The old strategy of just training and

staying behind walls failed. The new strategy of getting into the

fight, getting out into the neighborhoods, holding territory with

additional combat capability, and forming new transforming alliances is

working.

Senator Levin, a dear friend, wants to say we are going to leave in

March of 2008, or 120 days from now--I cannot remember the wording of

the amendment. Basically, it is a statement by the Congress that we are

going to undo the surge, the surge comes to an end, we begin to leave.

We will leave a force behind that will do a couple things--train the

Iraqi Army and police force. We tried that for 4 years. Training during

a war is a little different than training when you are not at war. We

train our soldiers at home, but they

are not in a wartime situation while they are being trained. The people

in Iraq are being trained and fighting at the same time. They need more

than training, they need combat capability that is nonexistent on their

part.

That is a democracy that is less than 4 years old. Their constitution

is less than 18 months old. The Iraqi Army and the police force, 4

years ago, was there to support the dictator, not democracy. So if you

expect, from the ashes of the dictatorship, a functioning democracy in

4 years, I think you are sadly mistaken. It took us 11 years to write

our own Constitution.

Why am I hopeful that we can still win in Iraq? No. 1, there is

evidence with the new strategy that we can defeat and destroy al-Qaida

in Iraq. No. 2, every time an Iraqi soldier is killed or a policeman is

murdered, someone takes their place. Every time a judge is

assassinated, somebody else comes along and says,

What more can you ask? We are losing troops, and it is heartbreaking.

The enemy that we are fighting understands that Americans don't like

the taste of war--and that is an asset, not a liability. We are not a

warring people. It is not our nature as a people to go to other places

and take land from people and dominate their life. It is our nature to

allow people to chart their own destiny and to be partners

economically, while the enemy wants no part of that.

So what I hope we will do is take these amendments that will come to

the floor and ask ourselves one simple question: If this amendment

passes, what affect does it have on our military commanders to execute

this new strategy that is clearly working? If this amendment passes,

how does it affect al-Qaida in Iraq and throughout the world? What

affect would it have on the voices of moderation that are giving their

own lives to change their own country in Iraq? If this amendment

passes, how does it affect Iran?

The one thing I learned from this last trip is that al-Qaida

overplayed their hand, and we are taking advantage of it. Iran is

trying to destabilize Iraq now more than ever. Don't mistake these new

alliances between coalition forces and Sunni Iraqis to be a political

reconciliation. The bad news from my trip is that the Iraqi Government

is paralyzed, the political leadership in Iraq--Sunni, Shia, and Kurd--

are unable to get their act together at this point. New elections would

be good for the Sunnis.

Mr. President, how much time do I have?

We will talk more about this. The good news is, the surge

is al-Qaida's worst nightmare. They have been rejected by the Sunnis in

Iraq, and if we stay on them, we can destroy al-Qaida in Iraq. The bad

news is, the current political infrastructure in Iraq is incapable of

making the hard decisions for the moment. We have to think of new ways

to push them.

There is much more to follow.

I yield the floor.