Mr. President, last week was a very productive week for the

Senate and the American people. With Democrats and Republicans working

together, the Senate was able to pass the conference report

implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations. Also, we passed the

Fiscal Year 2008 Homeland Security appropriations bill and the Higher

Education Reauthorization Act.

This week, we will turn our attention to important domestic

initiatives, including reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance

Program and passing the ethics conference report to strengthen the

integrity of our Government. That legislation is completed. The House

will pass it tomorrow. Without any qualification or reservation, it is

the most significant lobbying and ethics reform in the history of our

country. I hope we can do this piece of legislation without a lot of

turmoil. I hope that people understand how important it is to the

American people.

As we focus on issues that will lead to a better and brighter future

for millions of Americans, two new reports illustrate that neither the

present nor the future seem particularly bright for the Iraqis and Iraq

itself, where our brave troops are fighting in this intractable civil

war.

One report that came down this morning is from a humanitarian

organization. The other is from President

Bush's own Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

According to the first report--released by Oxfam, an international

aid organization, and the NGO Coordination Committee network in Iraq--8

million Iraqis are in need of immediate emergency aid. So according to

this first report, 8 million Iraqis are in need of immediate emergency

aid. That is probably more than a third of the population. It means

they are desperately lacking basic daily necessities such as food,

water, and sanitation.

Even more troubling, these conditions are worse now than before the

war started. Before the war, 19 percent of Iraqi children were

malnourished. Today, that is 28 percent. And 50 percent lacked adequate

water supplies before the war; that is now 70 percent. So 70 percent of

all Iraqis live without clean water.

With awful and deteriorating conditions such as these, it is no

wonder a recent poll of the Iraqi people showed 70 percent of the Iraqi

people believe the American presence is making them less safe.

Our troops are certainly not to blame for these failures to make the

Iraqi people safer or healthier. In the war's 4-plus years, they have

accomplished everything they have been asked to do. They took down the

Iraqi dictator. They have heroically battled those who seek to

destabilize Iraq and the region. They have provided time for Iraqi

factions to come together and negotiate a peaceful settlement of their

differences which, unfortunately, these factions have not taken

advantage of.

These failures lie with the President, who took us to war without a

plan for peace, and the Defense Department generally, which has not

managed to administer a strategy for success, and the Iraqi Government,

which hasn't taken responsibility for their country's own future.

The second new report, from the Inspector General's Office for Iraq

Reconstruction, sheds new light on how thoroughly our efforts in that

area have failed to help Iraqis and how dearly that failure is costing

American taxpayers.

This inspector general's report tells us Iraq's central government

has refused to take responsibility for more than 2,300 reconstruction

projects America has already paid close to $20 billion to construct.

The result is many projects are lapsing or continue to rely on

American funds only.

I say this in the background of the Iraqi people having arguably the

largest oil reserve in the world. When I met those in the first Iraqi

Government, along with Senator Frist, one of the Iraqis proudly said of

the governing body: People say we have the second largest oil reserves

in the world, but we have the largest oil reserves in the world.

I don't know whether it is first or second, but they have a lot of

oil, which translates to money, and they are not helping at all with

these projects.

Not a single project has been turned over to the Iraqi Government in

more than a year. Even among those few that have been turned over,

many, if not most, are now failing.

As a result, our almost $6 billion investment in Iraq reconstruction

is largely being wasted. What would happen in America? We would not

tolerate $6 billion being wasted in taxpayer dollars, and we should not

stand for it in Iraq--especially when it is our taxpayers' money that

is being wasted.

As long as we continue our open-ended commitment of troops, the Iraqi

Government has no incentive to step up. As long as we continue

financing projects that they let lapse, they will continue to let our

troops and taxpayers shoulder the burden.

The father of a soldier from Nevada wrote me recently to tell me how

that burden is affecting his son and his son's fellow soldiers. He gave

me permission to read this when I called and asked him after reading

this heartfelt letter. He asked me not to mention his son's name, so I

am not going to do that. I will not mention the man's name who wrote

the letter. If anybody has a question, I will be happy to show them the

letter in my office.

He wrote:

The Presiding Officer, from firsthand experience, knows what this man

is talking about. Most of us don't.

This young man from Nevada, fighting with bravery far beyond his 20

years, deserves better.

As his father said, he signed up for the Armed Forces to ``make a

difference.'' There are challenges facing America in nearly every

corner of the globe--real dangers that will affect our security for

generations to come. This young soldier should be helping us wage a

real war on terrorism that goes after those who attacked us. He should

be involved in peacekeeping missions to stop genocide and spread peace.

Instead, he is stuck in an endless war that even President Bush's own

military experts admit has no military solution.

It is long past time to end this preoccupation with Iraq. It is time

to rebuild our overburdened military, so this young soldier from

Nevada, and 160,000 more just like him, have the rest and care they

need to do their job effectively.

As we work this week to make life better for millions of Americans at

home--especially children--we continue to think of our troops and the

Iraqi people who suffer abroad, and we will continue to work every day

to bring about the new course our troops and all Americans deserve.