Madam President, as we celebrate this holiday season

with our families, as we gather with those we love and give thanks for

our tremendous blessings, we remember how incalculable the losses have

been to the families of the 3,888 soldiers who have been killed in

Iraq. Their losses cannot be tallied, not in the number of Christmas

nights spent without the one they loved; not in the number of days

since their wives, husbands, parents, and children left home forever.

We cannot calculate the strain on the 28,661 wounded soldiers and their

families, many of whom will be spending this precious time of the year

in a military hospital, coping with their blindness, living with only

one leg or arm, sleeping through nightmares of the battlefield instead

of the beautiful dreams they used to know this time of year.

As we hold them in our hearts--as well as all of the men and women in

uniform across the globe who serve to protect the country and to

promote its interests, for which we have eternal gratitude--as we hold

them in our hearts and express that gratitude, we also watch our money

slip away from us in Iraq. That is a casualty we can and must count.

I have come to the floor over the last 2 months to talk about the

cost of Iraq to us at home. The lives lost in Iraq cannot have a price

put to them. Their sacrifice and that of their families have no price.

The human suffering of those who have been wounded also has no price.

But there is also a price that is calculable at home, and it is what

the war is costing not just in dollars from our Treasury and debt cast

upon on the next generation of Americans, but what it is costing in

lost opportunities at home. There is a brutal holiday irony that is no

cause for festive spirit in Washington.

The irony is this: President Bush and his Republican allies in

Congress held hostage some key investments we need to make right here

in our country, in order to extract a promise of more money for the war

in Iraq.

They are asking for more than $150 billion more for Iraq next year,

but at one point they threatened to starve the entire Government of

funding over a difference in the Federal budget that amounts to less

than one-tenth of what the President wants to spend on the war next

year. He was ready to shut the whole Government down over the

difference of what amounts to less than one-tenth of what the President

wants to spend on the war next year.

This holiday season we wondered if President Bush

wanted to be Scrooge to America and Santa Claus to Iraq. Over the last

several months I have spoken many times about what the American

presence in Iraq is costing at home. The true cost of the $455 billion

we have spent on that war and the $10 billion per month we continue to

spend might never be more clear than it is right now, at a time when

Congress debated the budget for almost the entire Federal Government.

While we have been here crunching numbers, American families are

feeling the crunch of a few numbers themselves: the interest rate on

their mortgage that is about to jump beyond what they can afford, the

price on the gas pump when they fill their tank, the price of heating

oil and natural gas, higher grocery bills, fare hikes or threats of

hikes on public transportation, and the skyrocketing costs of providing

medical care for themselves and their children.

The President's consistent threats to veto funding for Federal

Government operations forced across-the-board cuts to programs and

services that so many Americans are counting on. This winter, as snow

and ice fall on roads across America, people are waiting for better

ways to travel. They are waiting for expanded, affordable public

transportation, progress on efficiency, and new sources of fuel and

power. They are waiting for our Nation to fill our energy portfolio

with something other than the usual energy sources.

The omnibus spending bill the Senate approved this week would inject

another $1.7 billion in the development of renewable sources of energy,

such as solar, wind, and geothermal. It is an important step--but it

could have been much greater.

Republicans have consistently objected to bigger steps. They said

weaning us off fossil fuels is too expensive. Meanwhile, they have

insisted that oil companies need more multimillion-dollar tax cuts.

Meanwhile, we spend enough money to pay for that entire renewable

energy package in Iraq in just 5 days--in just 5 days.

Energy independence for our country, stopping giving

foreign countries that wish us harm the ability to have the resources

to make that harm happen, and that we could have funded for 5 days in

Iraq. Those are the choices that we make.

Five days, Senator Byrd.

Cancer patients going through the dark winter of their illness are

waiting on lifesaving treatments that only intensive scientific

research can discover. Congress has a bill before it to fund that

research, but President Bush vetoed the funding once, and his allies in

Congress have whittled it down as much as they could. The cost of the

funding increase for that cancer research, to turn the winter of their

illness into the spring of possibility? It is $329 million, or less

than 1 day in Iraq.

This winter, while President Bush asked for billions

more for security for the streets of Baghdad, he says we cannot afford

to bring security to the streets of our own hometowns. The Senate

proposed spending $55 million, in part to hire police officers

specially trained to stop child sexual predators. We have seen the

fantastic growth of the Internet--and that is great. It brings many

good things with it. But it also brings challenges. The President did

not just force funding to stop child sexual predators to be cut in

half, he sliced it to less than a third of what it was. We could have

made up the difference and fully funded the program to stop child

sexual predators with what it costs to be in Iraq for just about 2\1/2\

hours.

Being able to successfully have the law enforcement capability to

pursue child sex predators versus 2\1/2\ hours in Iraq. Where are all

the family values we hear talked about so often? What ever happened to

recognizing the importance of our children, who are truly our greatest

asset, but also our most vulnerable asset? What are our values? What

are our priorities?

There are too many provisions in this big funding bill that are

absolutely essential, too many to name here. But the victims of the

cuts that the President and his Republican allies have called for, the

millions of Americans waiting for clean power that will not be

produced, the cancer patients who are waiting for research that will

not be allowed to happen, the communities trying to stop child sexual

predators who are waiting for police officers who will not be hired:

These people are also too many to name.

In that sense, even beyond the lives lost overseas, the cost of the

war in Iraq has been incalculable. If there is one thing we must all

acknowledge right now, it is this: The war in Iraq is not free, it is

not without consequences here at home, and no one should be pretending

that this war is free.

The Bush administration likes to parrot the line that we are fighting

them over there so we do not have to fight them here. But Americans

have figured out what they mean, and what they mean is: We are spending

all our money over there so, by the way, we did not have it to spend

here.

Above all, this is a question of values. Do we value our children,

and value protecting them? Do we value our schools and the education we

want our children to have so they can continue to make America the

global competitive leader? Do we value the men and women who wear the

uniform, not just by marching in a parade on Memorial Day or going to a

Veterans Day service, which we should, but by taking care of their

health care and their disabilities and taking care of their survivors,

for those who commit the ultimate sacrifice, as a grateful nation truly

does? Or will we neglect those and other priorities such as the health

care of our children and of our families?

The Democratic budget bill set out for our values a clear and serious

test. We cannot allow the budget to have a heart as cold as the ice on

our front steps. We cannot let our financial stability melt away, and

we cannot continue to let more of our money burn up in a war that has

taken so much from so many for so long.

At year's end, we speak of renewal, we return to our families and

witness a rebirth of hope. This season is about the best in each and

every one of us. This season, decisions we make are going to test how

we operate as a government and test what we stand for as a nation.

There is no better time than now to let the best in American values

guide our way: generosity, equality of opportunity, cooperation with

one another, turning to each other instead of against each other.

We have the power to end unnecessary suffering and waste, and the

chance to approach these tasks with a fresh sense of urgency that they

require. As we rest and dream in the company of those we love, let us

remember that December is the darkest

time of the year, but it is also the turning point when the sun begins

to shine more and more each day.

Together we offer our wish, our hope, and our prayers that the dreams

that have carried us so far of peace on Earth, good will toward all may

yet still come true.

Before I yield the floor, I would like to take the opportunity to

acknowledge the individuals in my now second year here in the Senate

whom I have seen work incredibly hard, but very rarely get

acknowledged, all of those who help us as we preside: the clerks, who

keep all of the documentation that comes before the Senate moving; the

Parliamentarians, who try to keep us in some degree of order as we move

along the way; the party secretaries and their staffs, who do such a

great job on informing us as to what is happening and to try to keep

somewhat of a schedule in terms of our lives here in the Senate; to

those in the cloakroom who also produce that service; to the pages who

have done a great job.

It was a privilege to have the opportunity to talk to so many of

them. I think they are going to carry their experiences here with them

a lifetime, and I am sure that maybe we will see some of them in this

Chamber in the future.

To all of those who make this institution the greatest democratic

institution in the world operate the way it successfully operates, my

deepest thanks, my best for the holiday season.

With that, I yield the floor.