Mr. President, as I listened this last week to media

reports about a reported plan by Senate Democrats to deauthorize the

Iraq war resolution, my first reaction was that they cannot be serious;

they cannot want to have Senators managing the war on terror from the

floor of the Senate. We would be telling our commanders and our troops

how to do their jobs.

Under the latest Democratic proposal--which, incidentally, is now the

fifth resolution that they have brought forward--that was unveiled last

week, there would be no combat role for our troops in Iraq. Yet we

would still allegedly have some number of troops there for training,

support, and logistics.

I think the question you have to ask with a policy such as that is,

What if those troops are fired upon? Can they not return fire because

the Senate says they are not to have a combat role?

Just when I thought this debate had reached the low point on the

depth chart, the Senate Democrats have drained a little more out of the

pool. For weeks now, they have been attacking Republicans for blocking

a debate on Iraq when nothing could be further from the truth.

Republicans welcome a debate about Iraq. The only difference is we

believe it should be a full, fair, and open debate. The Democratic

leaders tried to prevent that by blocking any Republican amendments.

The Democrats want a rigged, one-sided debate that has nothing to do

with substance and everything to do with political theater. That is

wrong, and it is wrong for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, it is wrong because it undermines the unique role our

Founders designed for the Senate, a place where debate is welcome, a

place that is deliberative, and a place where the power to amend is

recognized. Under the Democrats' rigged approach, only their proposal

gets heard. Republicans asked for just one alternative, one amendment,

and it was rejected by the Democratic leadership. Now, I would ask,

where is the fairness in that? Where is the openness in that?

Secondly, and more importantly, it is wrong because it sends entirely

the wrong message to our troops and to our enemies. Our troops need to

know that they are supported and that their mission is supported. Our

enemies need to know we are serious about winning. The action taken by

Senate Democrats on this issue has trivialized this very serious

debate, and I believe we owe it to those who have sacrificed so much,

and to their families, to give this new strategy a chance to succeed.

I visited a number of soldiers last week at Walter Reed Hospital. I

think that is my fourth trip up there. I have also had the opportunity

to visit with soldiers injured on the battlefield at the hospital in

Landstuhl, Germany, at Ramstein Air Force Base. These are men who have

lost limbs due to IEDs and EFPs. They are an amazing group of people,

an amazing inspiration, and they want to know their sacrifice has not

been in vain.

This strategy which has been proposed is a change. It originated with

our commanders, and it is supported by our commanders. It calls for

several things. It calls for some additional troop strength in the

region, primarily in Baghdad and also some out in Anbar Province. It

calls for different rules of engagement in that fight, and it calls for

more Iraqi involvement in several different ways:

Militarily. It gets the Iraqis more into the fight. They take the

lead, and the United States takes more of a support role.

Economically. There are requirements that the Iraqi Government invest

in infrastructure in their country and that they come up with a way of

dividing the oil revenues so that all the different locations in the

country can benefit from this great resource they have available to

them.

It puts in place political benchmarks as well. They need to hold

provincial elections.

All these things--military, economic, and political benchmarks--are

things the Iraqis have to meet. I believe we will know in a matter of

months whether this new strategy is working. I want it to work. I want

to see our troops succeed, and so do most Americans.

A nonbinding resolution signaling a lack of support was bad enough,

but now the Democrats in Congress have taken what in my view is a far

more dangerous turn. They have embarked on a course which is binding,

which has the force of law, and which would have Congress managing a

war. That is a very frightening prospect, but that is exactly what this

latest Democratic proposal would do.

In fact, listen to what was said yesterday by the chairman of the

Armed Services Committee. He was asked on ``Meet the Press'' by Tim

Russert about how many troops would be left behind under their

proposal, and he said a limited number. Mr. Russert said: 10,000,

20,000? The distinguished Senator, chairman of the Armed Services

Committee, said:

I am glad there is going to be some role for General Petraeus. I am

glad he will be deciding some things in the theater over there.

When the question was asked later on by Mr. Russert: Aren't you tying

the hands of the Commander in Chief, the chairman of the Armed Services

Committee, Senator Levin, said:

I want my colleagues to listen to the proposal that has been offered

in the House of Representatives and just recently, this last week, was

discussed and debated over there. Essentially, what that plan would

entail is that the Congress would decide the particulars when it comes

to which troops can go on combat tours and which ones can be extended

beyond the year. To be sent into battle, troops would have to have a

year's rest between combat tours, and soldiers in Iraq could not have

their tours extended beyond a year. The Pentagon's stop-loss policy,

which prevents some officers from leaving the military when their

service obligations are up, would end.

These are very troubling developments and proposals, particularly

when they are considered in light of what the constitutional role of

the Congress is when it comes to these types of matters. Congress does

not have the expertise or the constitutional authority to micromanage

tactics in a war.

I want to read something for my colleagues from an op-ed in the Wall

Street Journal from a few weeks back. It was written by David Rivkin

and Lee Casey, and it says this:

Would someone on the other side of the aisle please step forward and

remind me that there is logic and common sense and that liberal

interest groups have not taken over our colleagues on the Democratic

side. These actions are stunningly transparent, designed to embarrass

the President and to woo liberal interest groups. Let us not go down

that road. Our troops and their families and the American people

deserve better.

There are a number of Members of the Senate who have served their

country and who are veterans. I have the highest respect for the

distinguished Presiding Officer, who is among those who have seen

combat and understands what it entails and the chain of command. I

can't imagine any Member of the Senate who has been involved in combat

who would condone having politicians here in Washington, DC, Members of

the Senate, no matter how well intended, directing and managing

military conflict and getting in the way of our commanders and our

troops and their ability to conduct and perform their mission and to do

their job.

I think it terribly unfortunate what has happened here in the Senate.

I do believe it has trivialized what should be a very serious debate. I

have maintained all along that this is a debate we ought to have

because this is the dominant issue of our time about which people

across this country have incredibly strong feelings. Irrespective of

how we got there and what one thinks about that, it is important now

that we evaluate seriously, that we examine, and that we analyze how

best to proceed and move forward.

There is a plan. It is being implemented. I want to see it succeed. I

hope and pray, for the sake of our troops in the theater, that it does

succeed. What we cannot afford to have happen in this Congress is to go

down this path where one side is trying to one-up the other side and

frame the debate, to define the terms of the debate in a way that is

politically advantageous to them. That is wrong.

That is why I am here today, to say we ought to have a debate. It

ought to be a full, fair, and open debate, in keeping with the

tradition and the history of the Senate and in keeping with the

commitment we have made to the men and women we have put in harm's way

and who wear the uniform of the United States of America. They deserve

to have our support not only of them but of the mission they are

undertaking. They need to know that we believe they can succeed, that

we believe they can win, that we believe they can achieve victory. If

we fail in that important mission, future generations are going to pay

a dear price. The global war on terror is not going away. It is

important that here in the Senate we dignify the great service of those

great Americans by having a dignified debate that is full, that is

fair, that is open, and that is not intent on micromanaging and

directing the affairs of our military leadership and telling our

commanders what they can and cannot do when it comes to winning this

very important war.