Mr. President, first, what a remarkable ally the junior

Senator from Rhode Island has been these few months he has been in the

Senate. For his eloquence and help on many

issues--particularly this issue--I thank him. I greatly enjoyed

listening to his remarks.

It has been 52 months since military operations began in Iraq. We

have now been engaged in the Iraq war longer than we were in World War

II. Approximately 3,600 Americans have died and 25,000 have been

wounded. More than 4 million Iraqis have fled their homes, and tens of

thousands, at a minimum, have been killed. With President Bush's surge

well underway, violence in Iraq has exploded to unprecedented levels

and American troop fatalities are up 70 percent. In short, from all

sides, the situation in Iraq is an unmitigated disaster.

As if that weren't bad enough, our national security continues to

suffer as the administration's single-minded focus on Iraq prevents us

from adequately confronting threats of extremism and terrorism around

the globe. Indeed, violence and instability continue to fester

elsewhere at a great cost to our national security.

Last November, when the American people cast their ballots, they

expressed their opposition to this war loudly and clearly. As the

situation continues to deteriorate, they have raised their voices still

louder. I know my colleagues hear their voices, as more and more of

them step forward to call for a long overdue change of course.

At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, those voices continue to

fall on deaf ears. Time and again, the President has made it clear that

nothing--not the wishes of the American people, not the advice of

military foreign policy experts, not the concerns of members of both

parties--will discourage him from pursuing a misguided war that has no

end in sight.

Congress cannot wait for this President to change course in Iraq

because you and I know he has no intention of doing so. He has made it

clear that he will continue to pursue massive military engagement

despite the wishes of the American people, despite the fact that our

military is stretched to the breaking point, and despite the fact that

our presence in Iraq has been, according to our own State Department,

So it is up to us in Congress to listen to the American people, to

save American lives, and to ensure our Nation's security by redeploying

our troops from Iraq. We have the power and we have the responsibility

to act, and to act now. That is why I will support the amendment

offered by Senators Levin and Jack Reed. By passing binding deadlines

for both beginning and ending redeployment, the Senate can take a

strong step toward bringing our involvement in this war to a close.

I especially applaud Senators Hagel, Smith, and Snowe for putting

principle ahead of party by cosponsoring this amendment. I hope their

example inspires still more Senators to realize that it is not enough

to just criticize the war or just call on the President to change

course and that we don't need to--in fact, we cannot afford to--wait

for more reports and more time before taking decisive action.

The Levin-Reed amendment doesn't go as far as I would like. I am

concerned that the exception in the amendment, particularly for

to Iraqi troops, would give the

administration too much wiggle room to ``repackage'' its military

mission instead of redeploying our brave service members. Nonetheless, I

am pleased to see so many colleagues--on both sides of the aisle--

recognizing, at last, that the President's course in Iraq has failed,

that Congress needs to act, and that we can and must safely redeploy

our troops.

Other amendments that have been proposed fall short because they

don't require the troops to be redeployed. It is not enough to pass

something that sounds good but doesn't move us toward ending the war.

Weak, feel-good amendments may give people political comfort, but that

won't last long. We can fool ourselves, but we can't fool the American

people.

Mr. President, it is increasingly clear that the war in Iraq has

become the defining aspect of our engagement in this part of the world

and that it, coupled with this administration's inconsistent efforts to

promote democracy and the rule of law, has unfortunately alienated and

angered those whose support and cooperation we need if we are to

prevail against al-Qaida and its allies.

Our role in the war in Iraq has generated a level of political

turbulence throughout the region and beyond. It has given way to a new

variety of al-Qaida-style militants. These militants are gaining

prominence in many countries that have traditionally been our allies.

The longer we remain in Iraq, the longer these new strains of extremism

will threaten the security of the region and, in turn, threaten our

Nation. As long as the President's policies continue, Iraq will

continue to be what the declassified National Intelligence Estimate

calls a for a new generation of terrorists.

Al-Qaida and its affiliates are not a one-country franchise. Yet this

administration continues to pretend otherwise, such as calling Iraq the

central front in the war on terror. Al-Qaida's networks have not

relinquished their global fight to focus exclusively on Iraq. By

deploying our troops from Iraq, we can focus on developing a

comprehensive global strategy to combat them around the globe.

As I said, the administration's policies in Iraq are an unmitigated

disaster. But there is a way to mitigate that disaster, to lessen the

burdens it is imposing on our troops, our national security, our

taxpayers, and our country. And that is to redeploy our troops from

Iraq.

There is no reason to delay this decision until September. We know

now what we will know then, and we know it isn't pretty. We have

already read in the Pentagon's first quarterly surge report that

violence has increased throughout much of the country in recent months,

and we know there is no military solution to Iraq's problems. The only

question is how long we are prepared to wait and how many Americans we

are willing to have killed before we act.

As my colleagues know, the majority leader and I have introduced

legislation that would safely redeploy our troops by setting a date,

after which our funding for the war would be ended. That is what

Congress did in 1993 with respect to our military mission in Somalia. I

continue to believe we must be prepared to take that step again to

finally put an end to the war in Iraq.

However, if the Levin-Reed amendment wins the support of a majority

of the Senate, I believe that will be an important step forward, and I

will likely not insist on a vote on the Feingold-Reid amendment at that

time. If our efforts to end the war don't succeed, however, I will

offer Feingold-Reid as an amendment to the Department of Defense

appropriations bill when it is considered by the Senate. Of course, I

hope that will not be necessary, but it will depend on whether enough

of my colleagues are prepared to back up their words with action, to

listen to the American people, and to say enough is enough.

This war doesn't make sense. It is hurting our country, and it is

time to end it.

I yield the floor.