Mr. President, 9 months ago, 13 Senators cast their vote

for a 1-year deadline for redeployment of most U.S. troops from Iraq.

Our country has been waiting impatiently for Washington to find the

right way forward for Iraq and the right policy for our troops. It

seemed then, when those 13 votes were cast, as it does now, that was

the only way to help Iraq and the Middle East to emerge from a

nightmarish war that has delivered chaos where it sought order, fear

where it promised freedom, and open-ended escalation where the

President promised us mission accomplished. This is a war which has

cost us dearly in just about every possible measure of American

interest and power.

Today, Democrats stand nearly united behind a strategy for success, a

strategy for success that includes a deadline needed to force the

Iraqis to stand up for Iraq. A lot has changed in the last 9 months,

but I am more convinced than ever that a combination of serious,

sustained diplomacy, real diplomacy, leveraged by a 1-year deadline for

the redeployment of U.S. troops, is the best way to achieve our goal of

stability in Iraq and security in the region.

I listened to administration spokespeople in the last few days as

they went on television blasting the Democratic proposal. It is

interesting how they continue their habit of just setting up a straw

man, putting something out there that has nothing to do with the

reality of the program, and then knocking it down. They are fond of

saying: a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq would be just terrible to

our interests in the region. Let's make it clear. A 1-year date from

now, with discretion to the President to leave troops there to finish

the training, with discretion to the President to leave troops there to

chase al-Qaida, with discretion to the President to leave troops there

to protect American facilities and forces, with the ability to have an

over-the-horizon presence--a 1-year deadline from today, which would be

entering the 6th year of this war, is not a precipitous withdrawal of

any kind whatsoever. In fact, there are many people in the country who

think that is not soon enough.

The fact is, this administration wants to sow fear in Americans, so

they choose to debate something that is not the proposal of those of us

who have put this proposal forward. What we propose to do is change the

strategy of our mission so we can achieve success.

What we have seen is that this open-endedness you just kind of say we

need to do this and we need to do that and we want the Iraqis to stand

up and we want the police to do better and Prime Minister Maliki said

he is going to deliver--none of that delivers anything. The Iraqi

politicians know that as long as there is no deadline, they can take as

long as they want to work out whatever power struggles and differences

they have. So they are using the presence of American forces as cover

for their own goals, for their own desires, until we in the United

States say to them: Hey, folks, get serious. Our young people are

prepared--obviously, because we have been doing it for 4 years--to put

their lives on the line in order to help you have democracy, but you

have to grab that democracy, you have to make decisions, and you have

to go in and police your neighborhoods.

The only way you are going to change that is by being responsible and

demanding something.

It provides the President the discretion to be able to complete the

training. What else, after 5 years, would we want to be in Iraq for

besides finishing the training and standing up the Iraqi forces and

chasing al-Qaida and fighting the legitimate war on terror?

This 1-year deadline is sound policy. It is based on the Iraq Study

Group's goal of redeploying U.S. combat forces from Iraq by the first

quarter of 2008. It is consistent with the timeframe for transferring

control to the Iraqis that was set forth by General Casey and the

schedule agreed upon by the Iraqi Government itself.

Even the President has said, under his new strategy, responsibility

for security would be transferred to Iraqis before the end of this

year. If the President is telling us that responsibility for security

can be transferred to the Iraqis by the end of this year, don't we have

a right to hold the President accountable for that goal? Don't we have

a right to hold the Iraqis accountable for that goal? If the goal is to

transfer security to them by the end of this

year, how can you resist the notion that you are going to leave troops

there to complete the training, chase al-Qaida, protect American

forces, but bring the bulk of our combat forces home so they, indeed,

will be standing up for their own security?

The President has said it. The Iraq Study Group has said it. The

generals have said it. Now it is time for the Senate to put it on

record as part of our effort to support this objective. It is long

since time for the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their country.

We need this deadline to leverage the Iraqis into making the hard

compromises that are necessary.

I might add, no young soldier from the United States or Great Britain

ought to be dying so that Iraqi politicians can get more time to

squabble, more time to try to strike a better deal for themselves. We

ought to be working overtime in order to bring about a compromise that

is ultimately the only solution to what is happening in Iraq today.

Even now, we keep hearing the Iraqis are close to a deal on sharing

oil revenues. But we still have not seen the final agreement ratified.

Without a real deadline to force a deal, there is no telling how long

it will take. But we do know that as long as there is no deadline, the

Iraqis will believe they can take as long as they want.

We also know American soldiers and Iraqi civilians will continue to

die and be maimed while those politicians continue to use the presence

of American forces as a cover for their other objectives. We saw that

again last weekend, when Iraq's neighbors and key players from the

international community finally got together at a conference in

Baghdad. The conference was a welcome development. We have been calling

for it for several years. It was long overdue. But nothing tangible

came out of it because, of course, no preparations and no diplomacy had

been carried out leading up to it in order to get something substantive

to come out of it. That is precisely why a deadline is so critical and

essential, to force everyone to focus on the urgent need to reach a

political solution.

The debate--this debate, a debate the Senate needs to have--offers a

very clear choice, a choice between a new way forward and the old way

that has taken us backward.

I might add, yesterday we saw a little more of that old way as the

rhetoric escalated. The Vice President said yesterday,

First of all, there is nothing arbitrary about a date for next year.

The Iraq Study Group put it forward, the President said security

responsibility could be transferred by the end of this year, and the

generals put it forward. But more importantly, the Vice President of

the United States must be the last person in America who believes the

enemy is waiting or watching the clock. It is Iraqi politicians who are

watching the clock. They are the ones who are delaying and squabbling.

The enemy is busy doing what the enemy has been doing.

Moreover, the Vice President lumps things together in the word

``enemy'' here in a very strange way. Yes, the enemy is al-Qaida, and

we are focused on al-Qaida. But the fact is that this war in Iraq is

fundamentally a civil war now. It is a struggle between Sunni and Shia,

and the last I knew, they are Iraqis and they are not our enemy. They

are fighting amongst each other for the power and the future of Iraq.

With each day, this administration becomes more detached from the

realities.

I believe if you look at the figures, this is not a temporary surge.

This weekend, we learned that the President's escalation is going to

involve nearly 5,000 more troops than the 21,500 that was initially

announced and the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the total

could eventually reach 48,000 additional troops total. The original

cost estimate was about $5.6 billion but the CBO tell us the final

amount could reach nearly five times that much. And it looks more and

more like the troop increase could last well into next year.

We also see that most people understand that when the Vice President

talks about undermining the troops, there is not one of us here who is

not outraged by what has happened to the troops with respect to the

lack of adequate armor, the lack of adequate humvees, the lack of

adequate support, numbers of personnel and planning, and, most

importantly, the treatment of those soldiers when they have come home--

a VA budget that is inadequate, a disability system that is

dysfunctional, and obviously the treatment we saw recently at Walter

Reed.

The Vice President needs to focus on how you really support the

troops. The way you really support the troops is to get the policy in

Iraq right. We have a policy for success. They have had a 4-year policy

of failure that has made Iran stronger, North Korea stronger, Hamas

stronger, Hezbollah stronger, weakened our relations in the region, and

has certainly not served the interests of our national security.

It is time for the Senate to do what this administration has

stubbornly refused to do to recognize that we should honor lives lost

with lives saved. That starts by putting aside the hollow rhetoric and

straw men that have undermined a real debate for far too long and

support a strategy that preserves our core interests in Iraq, in the

region, and throughout the world. That is how we support the troops.

Mr. President, we can do better. This resolution we have submitted is

a way to do better.

I yield the floor.