Mr. President, I have not had a whole lot to say in the

Senate about the process, the various proposals, and even the substance

of the Iraq resolutions. But it obviously is a very troublesome issue

for me.

One of my concerns is the process. How bad could we possibly look as

an institution? We can't come to an agreement on how to have a full

debate and votes. Everybody says we will agree to this but not that,

and it goes back and forth. For the life of me, I cannot understand why

we cannot have some clear identification of some different approaches

to this issue and have debate and vote on them.

The majority leader has to understand he cannot dictate what

amendments the Republicans are going to offer and the substance of

those amendments or resolutions, if you will, any more than we can

dictate that to the Democrats. It has to be a fair process. I think

that can be worked out. I know our leaders are talking--and I wish them

the best--so that we can have debate and a vote on different approaches

and move on to other issues.

My second problem is, how many iterations is this going to go

through? I remind my colleagues that the election is over. It was last

year. All we have been doing in the Senate is political partisan

positioning, all sound and fury, achieving nothing. What is the score

in the Senate? 0 to 0. Democrats haven't gotten anything done. Not one

bill of any substance that we have passed has been signed into law,

except a continuing resolution, which we acknowledged had to be done to

keep the Government operating and, frankly, because we didn't do our

work like we should have on that issue last year. That is all. It is

all about positioning.

There is one other score that is the worst of all: Democrats, 0;

Republicans, 0; American people, 0. We have to figure out a way to quit

finding what we can disagree about and find some things we can work

together on for the good of the people.

Regarding this Iraq issue, on the one hand, we say we want to

succeed. On the other hand, you have the out-of-Iraq caucus saying get

out of there, set deadlines, and withdraw the troops. We say we are

giving General Petraeus our total confidence with a unanimous approval

in confirmation. He is there trying to get the violence calmed down and

to do a better job and get an opportunity for their Government to do

what it needs to do, have economic development. So while we are saying:

Congratulations, we all vote for you and wish you will succeed, we are

over here doing things that could potentially undermine his ability to

get them done.

You might say: Oh, well, that is not really what is at stake with the

Iraq resolutions. Remember, to show you what positioning is going on,

today, let's say we come to the conclusion that we are going to have

two or three different votes and we will finish at some point this

afternoon on the latest iteration of the Reid positions and we will

move on to the budget. Well, the problem with that is we have already

been told this will be back on the supplemental appropriations--the

emergency appropriations to fund the needs of our men and women in

uniform. We are being told: By the way, we are going to put this

restrictive language on the funding resolution. So we are going to

revisit this issue the week after next.

I think what we are doing is the worst of all worlds. We have had

nonbinding resolutions to express the sense of the Senate, which is a

misnomer in itself. Then, now we finally come to what would be

statutory language in a joint resolution by Senator Reid, which has

deadlines and begins a process of Congress micromanaging a war.

We have tried it before and it didn't work, or it led to what some

people consider a disaster. For us to state some opinions is one thing,

but it has gone beyond that now. This is going to have an effect. I

don't think there is a lot of language or a lot we can do that can

positively affect what is going on in Iraq right now, but there is a

lot we can do that will negatively affect it.

So I think to start setting deadlines and having the Congress trying

to micromanage what is going on in Baghdad--we cannot even manage the

process. How are we going to manage a war? Even the New York Times--and

I don't usually quote them because most of the time I disagree with

everything they have to say--is raising questions about the different

resolutions and what would be the effect of what we are trying to do in

the Congress about Iraq.

The Economist, I think the world's most respected magazine, said

there is actually progress being made. General Petraeus is doing some

things that have made a difference. Maliki and the Government there are

beginning to make some decisions. We say meet your benchmarks, but as

progress is being made, we say: If you don't do it like we have

outlined, we are going to begin to just withdraw.

Mr. President, I wish my colleagues--all of us on both sides of the

aisle--would think seriously about what we are doing in Iraq.

Then also, of course, we are going to go to the budget resolution

next week. I have been through a lot of budget battles. Again, we are

going to fuss and we are going to fight and we are going to have lots

of amendments and we will have a vote-arama, which is the worst

exhibition imaginable. We will vote on

25 amendments in a row probably every 3 minutes and have no idea what

we are voting on. We will finish it up, and what effect does it have?

None. The President doesn't sign it. We treat our own budgets about the

same as we treat the President's budgets: We ignore them. We trash them

a while and then throw them out in the street and do what we want to

do.

I do think the budget is going to be the beginning of an opportunity

for the American people to have buyer's remorse about what they have

done with the Congress. This is going to be sort of a typical budget

debate. The headline again in the New York Times is:

I think in theory you can say Republicans always want to cut taxes,

and they don't want to worry a whole lot about the effect that has on

the deficit, although I believe if we cut taxes in the right way, we

get more revenue.

I also think we all better take a look at what has been the effects

of our tax policy and our budgets on the economy. The economy is good.

Do we have some problems in the energy area and health care? Yes. We

ought to do something about those issues. But overall, we have had

economic growth. Revenues are pouring in.

So what is the budget I am looking at going to do? I think Senator

Conrad is a very serious chairman of the Budget Committee. I know he

would like to do more than he is going to be able to do. I know he

would like to do entitlement reform. We know it has to come. We will

not belly up to that bar this year or next year. Maybe something will

occur and we will do it in 2009.

This is going to be a budget where there is more domestic spending,

less defense spending, and tax increases. That is what is going to

happen. That is what always happens. We may not be a whole lot more

responsible with a Republican budget, but this is your basic Democratic

budget, and we are going to see it next week. We are going to describe

it as one of smoke and mirrors. It assumes the tax cuts are going to be

extended into the future, but it doesn't come up with any way to pay

for them. Under the new rules, we are going to have pay-fors. If you

increase spending, you are going to have to pay for it, or if you have

tax cuts, you are going to have to pay for them, but it doesn't say how

that is going to occur.

I do think we are at a critical juncture. We have gone through the

opening, trying to get used to how we run the institution with new

management. We haven't done it well. I am going to mark it off as the

early phases of a new Congress and feeling our way forward. But when we

get through positioning, I hope we are going to find a way to do some

things together. We should have immigration reform. We need it. I know

``comprehensive immigration reform'' has gotten to be a dirty word, but

I do think we have to deal with it in a broad way. It has to deal with

legal immigration, illegal immigration, and we are going to have to

have a temporary worker program. We have to find some way for people to

have a pathway to citizenship.

We have to address health care in America. Health care has become so

expensive and, in many cases, not accessible. Why can't we work

together on that issue?

Energy--the energy situation in America is a national security risk

and an economic risk. Some people say: Oh, we can fix it by raising

mileage standards for automobiles, CAFE standards. Some of us--I am in

that group--think we don't have to produce less or get along with not

having more oil and gas and nuclear power and everything else. I think

we can have more of everything. Let's see if we can't find a way to

come together and maybe do both in a responsible way.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about these issues this morning.

I hope we can come to an agreement on how to proceed on Iraq, and I

hope we can finish it by sundown tonight and then move on to the

obligatory vote on the budget, which will be a waste of time, next

week, and then maybe we can get serious about what we do in the Senate.

I yield the floor.