Mr. President, I rise today to address the war

supplemental which was vetoed last night at 10 minutes after 6 by the

President. It is my understanding that today leaders from both sides of

the Senate will go to the White House, this afternoon, to begin talking

about where we go next.

I rise today to talk a little bit about what has got us to where we

are, why we are where we are, and what, in my judgment, as one Member

of the Senate, we need to be focused on.

I am glad the President vetoed the war supplemental with timelines

for withdrawal. It is absolutely wrong to tie the money to support our

troops to arbitrary timetables that have nothing to do with success or

failure but only to do with the declaration of a cause being lost. We

should never declare, as Members of the Senate, our cause to have been

lost. And we should never hold hostage the money for our troops based

on arbitrary deadlines or thresholds.

It is, however, important for us to debate the war on the floor of

the Senate. I hope when the next supplemental comes, it will be a

supplemental that goes to support our men and women who have been

deployed in defense of freedom, to give them everything they deserve

and everything they need without strings and complication. To do so

will not keep us in the Senate from debating the war, but it will

clearly separate the money to support our troops from whatever the

course that debate may take.

We have a long history in this country of many great Americans taking

exactly the same position. One of those great Americans, Walter George,

a Member of the Senate, from Georgia, a Democrat, in 1955--when Dwight

Eisenhower was President of the United States of America and Adlai

Stevenson had been his first opponent, and would be his second opponent

in the 1956 Presidential election--the big issue of the day was the

issue of Quemoy and Matsu and Red China's attempt to expand its

influence on those islands and the policy of the United States of

America and our President, Dwight Eisenhower. In Time magazine, April's

issue, 1955, Walter George, Senator, Democrat from Georgia, a man in

whose legacy and in whose shadow I now serve, said the following:

George said, and I continue to quote--

It has been 52 years since that statement was made, but it could

never ring more true than it rings today. Walter George was absolutely

right, and Walter George, a Democrat, came to the defense of Dwight

Eisenhower, a Republican who was President, when Dwight Eisenhower was

being forced to play our hand in a critical issue of the day. We should

never force our chief executive officer, nor should we force our

generals, nor our troops in the field, by declaring our hand before the

cards are dealt.

There are a few other quotes I wish to share with my colleagues as I

lead up to the point I want to make this morning, and these are

contemporary quotes and these are quotes about Iraq. These are quotes

about the supplemental. These are quotes about our brave men and women

in harm's way. The first is by General Lynch, the commanding officer of

the third ID. When asked about whether funding should be tied to an

arbitrary timetable for withdrawal, he said:

He is absolutely correct. Every time this country waited or every

time it determined to withdraw from a conflict or looked the other way

from a challenge of evil, it only had to muster itself in greater

numbers and fight with greater losses at a greater day in the future.

General Lynch continued:

I could not say it better myself.

Lastly, for quotes from contemporaries, Gary Kurpius, commander of

the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said the following:

My last quote is from an e-mail I got from Captain Schratt, on the

ground with the U.S. Army in Baghdad right now, a couple of weeks ago

when this debate was going on. He e-mailed me and said: I see they are

debating whether or not they can not support the war and still support

me. He said: That is the truth. Our troops are the war. They are deployed and they

are fighting and their funding should not be restrained or constrained

or in any way hinged on political gymnastics. Those gymnastics belong

in the speeches on this floor and the dialogue we have with our

administration.

Now, it is my understanding there are some who are talking about a

second supplemental to come, to be an incremental supplemental, maybe

60 days at a time. I would implore the Senate to consider not doing

that because that brings uncertainty to our troops in the field and

only partial funding on a daily or on a 60-day basis, which is wrong.

There are others who are talking about maybe benchmarks--not timetables

for withdrawal but benchmarks for the achievement of the Iraqi people.

That may or may not be wise, depending on what those are, and I will

reserve judgment, but I will tell my colleagues one thing. A lot of us

around here have selective memories and have forgotten the fact that we

have had some benchmarks.

In fact, when we went into Iraq, the President of the United States,

George W. Bush, declared three succinct benchmarks. He said: When we

deploy our troops, we will do the following: A, we will search and find

the weapons of mass destruction that the U.N. and the entire world

believed were there, and in fact we found the remnants and the

evidence, although never the smoking gun. Then, second, he said:

The

Iraqis have held three elections. They have a parliament. They have

established a self-determined democracy in their way of doing so, and

it is functioning. Then the President said:

Those are three benchmarks. Two of the benchmarks have been achieved.

The third benchmark is what the surge is intended to accomplish.

Today in downtown Baghdad and in Anbar Province, American troops are

sleeping and eating and deployed in the neighborhoods--not in bases--

side by side with Iraqi troops. The securing of neighborhoods is taking

place, the holding of neighborhoods is taking place, and the rebuilding

of those neighborhoods is soon to follow. In the months ahead, if we

remain committed to the cause, if we fund our troops, we have the

opportunity to reduce the violence, to allow the reconciliation that is

so necessary.

So as people debate whether we ought to put benchmarks in

supplemental appropriations for our men and women in harm's way, I hope

they will recognize we have benchmarks, three that we established when

almost every Member of the Congress voted to go into Iraq, two of which

have been completely met and satisfied and a third is partially there

and will ultimately be achieved if we don't pull the plug and we

continue to fund our troops.

War is never fun and it is always controversial. There is not a one

of us in this room who does not wish war was ever necessary. But we

know as we look back upon history, as Walter George, the Senator from

Georgia, said:

We are at such a day today with

our battle in Iraq and in the overall war on terror. Iraq is but a

battle in that war. We don't need to send signals that we will quit; we

don't need to declare that we have lost. We need to declare the resolve

to see the mission through. There are 140,000 brave men and women

deployed in Iraq right now committed to the cause. When they come home

and I talk to them, to the man and to the woman, they all say:

So as the leaders go to the White House today to discuss with the

President where we go next, as we look to what we do in this

supplemental, let's resolve to fund our troops. Let's resolve to do it

without condition on our troops. Let's resolve to do it without

declaring defeat but instead in the interest of and with a commitment

to victory. Then, if we have debate--and we should and we must--let's

have it on the floor, unattached to funding, not restricting our troops

but deciding what our course will be and the absolute objective to be,

rather than a conditional debate that only sends a message to our enemy

that our resolve may be lost and we may be turning the other way. As

Walter F. George said in 1955, an American Democratic Senator from

Georgia, in support of a Republican President, we should honor the

lives that have been lost and stay true to our commitment, and it will

never be in our interests to declare to our enemies what our intentions

might be.