Madam President, first let me thank Senator Warner and

Senator Nelson for their continuing hard work in refining the language

of this very important resolution, a resolution that I hope will garner

widespread bipartisan support when it is brought to the Senate floor

and debated next week.

Since we first introduced our resolution last week, we have had the

benefit of further consultations with experts. We have had the benefit

of conversations with our colleagues. We have had the benefit of

alternative resolutions that have been proposed by other Senators, and

we have had the benefit, most of all, of additional hearings in the

Senate Armed Services Committee, including a classified briefing today.

All of this activity has confirmed my belief that our resolution as

originally proposed was on precisely the right track, but the benefit

of these hearings, briefings, conversations and consultations has led

us to improve our resolution by making four modifications that the

distinguished Senators have just explained.

Let me, for the benefit of our colleagues, run through them one more

time.

First, the resolution now makes very clear that nothing in it is to

be construed as advocating any lessening of financial support for our

troops. Indeed, it goes firmly on record as being opposed to cutting

off funds that would be needed by our troops in Iraq. The language is

very clear on that.

Second, there has been a great deal of discussion about the need for

the Iraqis to meet certain benchmarks--benchmarks that in the past they

have not met. So we include language in this resolution that makes very

clear that we expect the Iraqi Prime Minister to agree to certain

benchmarks; for example, to agree to work for the passage and achieve

the passage of legislation that would ensure an equitable distribution

of oil revenues. That is a very important issue in Iraq.

It also includes a benchmark that the Iraqis are going to produce the

troops they have promised, and that they are going to operate according

to the military rules of engagement without regard to the sectarian

information or the sect of the people involved in the fighting. In

other words, it doesn't matter whether an insurgent is a Sunni or a

Shiite; if he is violating the law, engaging in violence, the Iraqi

troops and our troops would be able to arrest and detain or otherwise

battle these individuals.

It clarifies the language regarding the troop increase that the

President has proposed, and as the Senator from Virginia has explained

to our colleagues, it calls for a clarification of the command and

control structure so that we don't have a dual line of command. We want

to have a very clear chain of command, and we call for that. That isn't

the case now, and if you ask any military officer, he or she will tell

you that having a clear chain of command, a unity of command, is

absolutely essential. We have made these four changes in our

legislation, in the resolution. We hope our colleagues will take a

close look at it. I look forward to debating it more fully when we get

on this issue next week.

Again, I commend the distinguished Senators with whom I have been

very privileged to work on this: Senator Warner, the former chairman of

the Committee on Armed Services, my colleague, Senator Nelson, also a

member of the Committee on Armed Services. All three of us serve on

that committee. We have brought to bear our experience and what we have

learned in the last week as we continue to study this very important

issue, perhaps the most vital issue facing our country.

The resolution we drafted very carefully distinguishes

between the sectarian violence engulfing Baghdad, where the Senator and

Senator Nelson believe it would be a huge mistake for additional

American troops to be in the midst of that, versus a very different

situation in Anbar Province.

In Anbar, the violence is not sectarian; the battle is with al-Qaida

and with foreign fighters, the Sunni insurgencies, so we have Sunni

versus Sunni. It is not sectarian. And what is more, local tribal

leaders have recently joined with the coalition forces to fight al-

Qaida. It is a completely different situation in Anbar. I do support

the addition of more troops in Anbar. Indeed, the one American

commander whom I met with in December who called for more troops in

Anbar was General Kilmer.

It was a very illuminating trip with other Senators. It

has shaped my views on the issues before the Senate.

One American commander in Baghdad told me a jobs program would do

more good than additional American troops in quelling the sectarian

violence. He told me many Iraqi men were joining the militias or

planting roadside bombs simply because they had been unemployed for so

long they were desperate for money and would do anything to support

their families. This was an American commander who told me this.

Prime Minister Maliki, in mid-December, made very clear he did not

welcome the presence of additional American troops and, indeed, that he

chafed at the restrictions on his control of the Iraqi troops. So I

didn't hear it from Iraqi leaders, either.

The only place where I heard a request for more troops was in Anbar

Province where the situation, as we have discussed, is totally

different than the sectarian violence plaguing Baghdad.

If the Senator will yield on that point, since the

Senator was the chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, as well, I

would also share with our colleagues that the Senator presided over a

hearing in mid-November at which General Abizaid, the central command

general, testified before our committee that more American troops were

not needed. He reported he had consulted widely with generals on the

ground in Iraq, including General Casey, in reaching that conclusion.

I say to our colleagues that I think the record is clear. If you look

at the findings of your trip from October, the testimony before the

Committee on Armed Services from General Abizaid in November, what I

heard in mid-December, I have to say, respectfully, I do not believe

the President's plan with regard to Baghdad--not Anbar but Baghdad--is

consistent with what we were told.