Mr. President, I wished to, first of all, echo the comments

of my colleague from Utah. Fred Kagan is an expert, and what he had to

say in that report and in his subsequent summaries of it is something

all our colleagues should be familiar with because he makes the very

clear point that, as this mission is working, right now is not the time

to change the mission and go back to what it was prior to General

Petraeus's arrival on the scene.

Yet we still have Members of this body and the other body trying to

undercut the Petraeus plan in one way or another. The most recent

effort to do this is one which is especially distressing. Let me give a

little bit of background.

First, I wish to note that our Democratic colleagues have not taken

very long to reestablish their reputation--well deserved--as the tax-

and-spend party, as my colleague from Texas pointed out earlier. Now

that the Democratic Party is in control of the Congress, the agenda is

very clear. But yesterday, the chairman of the House Appropriations

Committee went a step too far because he proposed a new tax on every

American. This one, ostensibly, to fund the war.

Now, there are a lot of different excuses for raising taxes, as my

colleague from Texas pointed out a while ago, but I don't think we need

a new tax. If we did, our Democratic colleagues would not be proposing

$23 billion in more spending than the President proposed in his budget.

In other words, if a lack of revenue is the problem, then let us not

keep spending more than has been proposed in the budget. The tax-and-

spend priorities of the Democratic majority are very clear.

No, the real reason for Chairman Obey's plan to raise more taxes is

to

change our strategy in Iraq, and that is very clear from his own

comments. Along with the tax he proposed, in fact, he announced he

would not allow his committee to move forward with the bill the

President has requested to fund the troops in Iraq.

This is not the Defense authorization or Defense appropriations bill,

which funds the Pentagon and all the military activities over the

course of next year. No, this is the money for the troops who are

fighting right now in Iraq. As I said, the chairman made it very clear

that was precisely what he intended. In fact, quoting from a Wall

Street Journal article today, he said:

Well, this is not a card game, and you shouldn't be playing with the

lives of our troops by cutting off their funding while they are out in

the field. If you wish to make a policy point that we should change our

strategy in Iraq, change our mission, there are ways to do it without

cutting off the funds while the troops are out there trying to perform

the mission we have sent them to perform.

I thought the comment of my colleague from New Mexico, Senator

Domenici, as reported in the Washington Times in a story this morning,

was charitable and interesting.

That is the point. You can cut back Pentagon funding, you can try to

pass resolutions that call for a change in strategy, but at the end of

the day, you have to feed the soldiers. You can't refuse to send the

money to Iraq while the troops are there or you are literally pulling

out the rug from under the troops.

My colleague, Senator Graham from South Carolina, put it this way:

I remember when Bob Dole ran for the Presidency, and he was trying to

make some pretty important points and people didn't appear to be

listening to him. At one point, he said: Where is the outrage? And that

is the question I ask here. Where is the outrage of pulling the rug out

from under our troops while they are in theater trying to do what we

have sent them there to do?

This is not just bad policy, it represents a failure to support the

troops. Everybody around here says: Well, we all support the troops, we

disagree with the policy of being in Iraq. Now we have come to the

point where we are going to try to change that policy by not supporting

the troops? I don't think this is good policy. I don't think it is fair

to the troops whom we have sent into harm's way, and it is consistent,

as I said before, with this whole tax-and-spend ideology.

Try to change policy by withdrawing support for the troops but raise

taxes on the American taxpayer? It makes no sense at all, unless you

put it in the context with where the Democratic leadership has been

going now for some time with respect to the Iraq war. Let me go back a

little and quote from an article yesterday in the Associated Press.

Well, it didn't take long for that to come true. The Associated Press

noted:

I might say the Speaker of the House has already announced her

opposition to this new tax plan. Democrats are indeed divided. But for

those who are in authority to refuse to move the legislation forward,

and who talk about it in terms of it is the best card I have to play,

have the ability to stop the funding at the very time that the troops

need the money in the field.

Progress in Iraq, obviously, has been widely reported. An editorial

today in Investors Business Daily says:

So right at the time the strategy is working, we are going to pull

the money out? It makes no sense.

The Washington Post reports today:

And the New York Times today notes:

So at a time when the strategy of General Petraeus is working, our

friends on the other side of the aisle are deciding to pull the funding

so we can no longer continue the operation. That makes no sense at all.

But it does fit in with this larger strategy, as I said, to find any

way they can to change the course in the war.

Let me conclude with this point. It is now October 3, past the

beginning of the fiscal year on October 1, and yet the Democratic

majority has not passed one single appropriations bill to the President

for his signature to fund the government next year. It appears to me

there is a reason for this.

The Associated Press noted the following in an article on September

30:

And Roll Call had an editorial 3 days before, and I quote from part

of it:

Now, this wouldn't be the first time this kind of game has been

played, but especially if it is on the Veterans and Military

Construction bill, or if it is the Defense authorization bill that was

held up for so long, and now the measure to try to fund the troops in

Iraq, there is a very disturbing pattern here. Playing games with money

for veterans and the military in order to get more taxes and spending?

That is wrong. It is wrong. The American people need to know that at

the very time when General Petraeus's strategy is showing very positive

results in Iraq, it is the Democratic plan, at least in the House of

Representatives, to hold up that funding, not because there is a lack

of money, not because we need a tax increase to fund it but in order to

try to change the course of the President's strategy.

That is playing games with the money the troops need in the field.

Again, as Senator Domenici said, it is a pretty gutsy move, but in the

end, it would not work because you have to feed the soldiers.