Mr. President, I came to the Capitol yesterday on the

fifth anniversary of September 11. I looked out the window, down the

Mall on the west side, and I couldn't help but remember what we saw on

9/11. On that morning as we met in a small room on the west side of the

Capitol and watched the television broadcast and first heard of a plane

crashing into the World Trade Center, I thought: What a freak accident.

I hope a lot of people won't die.

Then as we watched incredulously, a second plane hit the World Trade

Center. The scales fell from our eyes and we knew exactly what was

happening. This was no accident. This was intentional. America was

under attack.

We met in this meeting a few minutes longer. Someone walked into the

room and said they were evacuating the White House. We looked down the

Mall on 9/11 and saw black, billowing smoke, and then the word came

across that there was some explosion at the Pentagon. We weren't sure

what had happened. A bomb? It turned out it was a plane.

As that black smoke billowed across the Mall, as we looked on that

bright sunlit day at this horrible, disgusting display of destruction,

we were told to evacuate this building, to leave the U.S. Capitol for

our lives as quickly as we could.

We raced down the steps, all of us, thousands of us, and gathered

outside. We stood on the grass not sure where to turn or where to go.

We heard a loud boom. Many of us thought it was another explosion. It

turned out it was the scrambling of our fighter planes over the

Nation's Capital to protect us.

Finally, after dismissing our staff, telling them to go home and find

a safe place, I walked a few blocks away from the Capitol Building and

sat, as most Americans did, for the rest of the day hearing the news

reports, watching the television scenes from New York.

Then late that evening, after that wrenching day, Members of Congress

gathered on the steps outside the Capitol in a rare, heartening display

of bipartisanship or nonpartisanship, said a prayer, and sang

In the weeks that followed, there was a mood on Capitol Hill unlike

anything we had seen for a long time. The President came to us within

hours and said: We are now declaring war on those responsible for 9/11.

He proposed that we mobilize the strength of America, all of us, and

strike back at those who had killed 3,000 innocent people on that day.

The President's plea was answered with unequivocal support on both

sides of the aisle.

I have often said that in the years I have served here, there is no

more difficult vote than a vote to go to war. We know that with that

vote, people will die. The enemy, brave Americans, and innocent people

will die, and you must take that seriously. But I didn't hesitate to

vote for that war against al-Qaida. I didn't hesitate to vote for that

war in Afghanistan. America had to stand and defend itself against

those who would kill innocent people, as they did on 9/11.

Yesterday, on the fifth anniversary of 9/11, there was an effort to

rekindle that feeling.

The President made important visits to New York, to the site of the

World Trade Center, to Pennsylvania where United flight 93 crashed into

the ground when the brave passengers took control of the plane away

from the terrorists and, in the process, may have saved my life. Many

believe that plane was destined for Washington, destined for this

building, this important symbol of America. Those brave passengers took

control of that plane and gave their lives in the process. The

President visited that rural setting to remember their heroism.

Then he came to the Pentagon, and I was honored to join him as he

laid a wreath at the corner of the new section of the Pentagon that was

rebuilt after 184 people in that building died on 9/11.

We gathered again on the steps yesterday, a bipartisan gathering of

the House and Senate, for a moment of prayer, a moment of reflection,

and to sing It was a time when we tried to

recapture that spirit of unity, that spirit of determination, and many

of us felt we were moving our Nation again in the right direction.

But what is it that divides us? We heard the speech of my leader and

friend, Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, and the speech of the Senator

from Pennsylvania, again at odds in debating about our policy. What

divides us is clearly another war--not the war in Afghanistan but the

war in Iraq. Twenty-three of us on the floor of this Senate, when given

a chance, voted against the authorization of force to go to war in

Iraq.

As a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I knew from closed

door sessions, which I was sworn not to disclose, I knew from those

sessions that many of the things that were being told to the American

people as reasons to go to war against Saddam Hussein and Iraq were

just plain wrong.

This last week, the Senate Intelligence Committee, in a bipartisan

report, made it public for the record, for

history, for all to see, that the American people were misled into this

war in Iraq--statements about weapons of mass destruction that didn't

exist, statements about nuclear weapons that didn't exist, statements

about connections between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida which were

fabricated. Those reasons were told to the American people to justify a

war which is now in its fourth year.

Unlike the war in Afghanistan where our mission was clear to go after

those who were responsible for 9/11, to go after al-Qaida, in Iraq we

are in our fourth year. The official report from the Pentagon this

morning is 2,671 of our best and bravest soldiers have died in that

war; more than 19,000 have returned wounded, serious wounds--

amputations, blindness, burns, traumatic brain injury. We have spent

more than $320 billion on that war. And last night, as the President

spoke to America, he went beyond that spirit of unity that brought us

together for the war in Afghanistan and against al-Qaida to discuss

this war in Iraq.

It is part of an offensive by this administration. We saw it on

Sunday with Condoleezza Rice, our Secretary of State, and with Vice

President Cheney's appearance on television. We saw and heard the

statements they made to justify a war in Iraq, a war which,

unfortunately, is not going well.

The Senator from Pennsylvania objected to Senator Reid saying that we

were involved in some sort of sectarian violence in Iraq. Those are not

original words of the Senator from Nevada. He made reference to the

General Accountability Office which released its report yesterday in

which it said:

The Senator from Pennsylvania criticized the Democratic leader for

being political and partisan in saying these words. But the same words

were used by the General Accountability Office. It is a fact. We can't

ignore it. The situation in Iraq has worsened.

Mr. President, do you know what the GAO reported in terms of violence

in Iraq? The figures are startling. I read the report:

The GAO published a graph yesterday. The number of attacks rose from

around 100 in May of 2003 to roughly 4,500 in July of 2006. Is it

political or partisan to note the obvious, the GAO report to which

Senator Reid made reference? That is not political partisanship; that

is a reality, and we should face that reality because Iraq does

continue to slip into civil war despite the billions that we have spent

and the thousands of American lives which have been lost in that

battle.

There is another political reality. Osama bin Laden is still on the

loose. Al-Qaida's membership, estimated at 20,000 on 9/11, is now

estimated by our intelligence agencies at 50,000. Instead of shrinking

and disappearing, they are growing geometrically.

And there is another reality. The Taliban is gaining ground again in

Afghanistan. They have set up shop in Pakistan where that Government

has agreed to have a safe haven for some of these terrorist forces.

That is unfortunate, and it is disastrous when you think of our long-

term war on terrorism.

Sitting at home in Springfield, IL, over the weekend, I listened to

Vice President Cheney when he appeared on He said

that those of us who make these speeches about the reality of the war

in Iraq are not showing the kind of resolve that we should. We are

somehow validating terrorism. We are weakening America's efforts to

fight terrorism.

I couldn't disagree more. If Members of Congress--if the American

public cannot stand up and speak when they disagree with the policies

of this administration, we have lost sight of the values of this

democracy and how important they are. Despite the Intelligence

Committee's disclosure of how we were misled into the war in Iraq, and

despite the situation on the ground today, when Vice President Cheney

says he would do it all again, it is a reminder that this

administration is resolute in continuing on a path that does not make

us safer and, in fact, endangers our troops even as we stand and speak

today. It strikes me as odd that this Vice President, after the

Intelligence Committee report, did not show even a hint of

embarrassment for some of the things he said before the invasion of

Iraq and not even a word of regret for misleading the American people.

Well, we have a different vision. We believe there are things we can

do to make America safe and strong. Let's take the 9/11 Commission

report. Let's take their recommendations and make them reality--100

percent of them. Instead of a failing grade, let's have an A+ so that

America can take these recommendations and move forward.

The budget of the Bush administration has continued to cut these

recommendations, has refused to fund the things that will make us

safer, whether it is a stronger National Guard, a better communications

system, stronger port facilities, more surveillance and security of

chemical plants and nuclear powerplants, better security on Amtrak, on

mass transit--these are things the Democrats on this side of the aisle

believe should be our highest priority in making America safe.

We need to strengthen our ports and our nuclear powerplants in my

State and across the Nation. We need to cut our dependence on foreign

oil so that we aren't indirectly subsidizing terrorism and indirectly

subsidizing those who are killing our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And we need to push to change course in Iraq. We need a responsible

redeployment of troops so that the Iraqis understand this is their

battle, this is their war, this is their country. There has to come a

time, in this fourth year of a war that has lasted longer than the

Korean war, when the Iraqis stand and fight for their own country, when

American troops are replaced and can come home.

Last week, the administration sent 5,000 more troops to Iraq. There

is no end in sight. The President said we must stay the course. I think

we need to change the course. We need to start the redeployment of

American troops--not precipitous, immediate withdrawal; that would be

wrong, but to start the redeployment of American troops so the Iraqis

stand and fight for their own nation, so that our troops, having served

us so well and so honorably, can come home safely.

The sad reality in Afghanistan is if we don't put more force in place

there, we are not going to see the results for which we fought for so

long. Afghanistan is tough territory. Many have learned that. The

British Empire learned it. The Soviet Union learned it as well. If we

are not going to become victims of the same fate, we need to make

certain that our commitment to NATO and Afghanistan is real. That is

part of the war on terrorism.

The Senator from Pennsylvania said of Senator Reid that he didn't

take our opponents seriously. The Senator from Pennsylvania is wrong.

Senator Reid understands terrorism, as we all do. He understands that

we need to stand together, on a bipartisan basis, to make America safe

and to fight the right war in the right place, to win a victory that

counts. That is why he spoke today. We should never forget, according

to the Senator from Pennsylvania, that we are fighting an enemy that

wants to die. He said that has never happened before.

I think a brief study of history would tell him it has. The Japanese

Kamikaze fliers had the same death wish as those who are suicide

bombers today. It has happened before. It doesn't make it any less of a

threat, but the fact is, we have faced it before and we have overcome

it.

It is interesting that as we listen to our military experts, they

tell us we cannot win in Iraq militarily no matter how many troops we

put in place; we have to win politically. We have to stop and reflect

on the fact that there is a large swath of this world that doesn't

understand who we are and what we stand for. They continually are told

the wrong thing about America. They continue to be misled. So as we are

strong militarily, as we must be, as we must defend America at home, we

must also reach out and spread the word about what America's values

are, what we are willing to stand for, so that we are better understood

in this world and so that this new

generation, looking for an impression of the United States, doesn't

come up with the wrong impression.

As we consider what we face today in the closing weeks of this

session, let's make sure we do stand together in a bipartisan fashion

for defending America as our homeland. Let's put the resources in place

to make us safer. We continue to stand behind our troops, but let us

not be so bull-headed that we won't consider any change in tactic or

strategy that might start to bring our troops home safely, with their

mission truly accomplished this time, and let's not give up on

Afghanistan. We cannot allow the Taliban to have a resurgence of power

and give al-Qaida another place to gather forces to launch against the

world. That is our mission. That is our responsibility.

As we gathered yesterday, it was a reminder that at one time not that

long ago we stood together in that effort.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a

quorum.