Mr. President, I rise today to speak on the amendment of

Senator Cochran, the amendment to strike the language, of which I am a

cosponsor. I raised this in the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense

last week. Senator Cochran indicated then that he would do as he has

done; that is, to move to strike the language in the supplemental

requiring the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq in 120 days, 4

months--120 days.

Mr. President, as you heard--and you have been a party to--4 months

is clearly not enough time for General Petraeus or the brave members of

our Armed Forces to have a chance to see if a surge in troop numbers

could turn the war. I don't know for sure. I had, as a lot of us did, a

conversation with General Petraeus before he took command about the

troop surge, about the 20,000 troops. I personally think we need

100,000 troops, but we don't have them. General Petraeus is a very

smart man. He is a combat soldier. He is in control. I believe to put

on an arbitrary timeline of 120 days is the wrong message at the wrong

time, where they are beginning--just beginning--to secure some

neighborhoods. Will they continue to do this? We hope so. But we should

bring every bit of stability we can to the Baghdad area.

I have no illusion about sooner or later coming home. I would like to

see our troops come home. I don't think that will be the end of the

struggle

with Islamic fundamentalists by any stretch of the imagination, but I

think if we are able to stabilize that area of Iraq to some degree,

perhaps there can be some kind of diplomatic resolution because

ultimately none of us ever envisioned staying in Iraq. We have been

there 4 years. I wish we were not there today, but we are and we are

heavily engaged.

I think we need to give our Armed Forces every opportunity to

succeed. We should not send an ambiguous message to them: We are going

to support you today and tomorrow we want you to withdraw, in 120 days,

or begin to withdraw. I think that is the wrong message, and I think it

would undermine the morale of our troops.

Congress should not be armchair generals. We should not try to

micromanage what is going on on the ground. That is why I support the

Cochran amendment. We need to give our commanders and our soldiers

every chance to succeed in Iraq, to bring stability there, where

diplomatic maneuvers then perhaps could begin to work. Sending

ambiguous messages to our Armed Forces is not the right way. They need

our support both morally and materially. I believe at the end of the

day they are going to get it.

The President has already signaled if this language were to stay he

would veto this bill. I believe what he says he is going to do. But we

can strike this language today. We can move on and get this

supplemental passed to make sure our troops are well funded and that

they have what they need to succeed. And they will succeed.

The members of our Armed Forces are in harm's way every day. We know

the horror stories about war. But they bravely face a sometimes unknown

enemy and have done everything asked of them--sometimes two and three

times, Mr. President, as you well know. Micromanaging the war from the

Halls of Congress is not the right thing to do.

I urge my colleagues to support the Cochran amendment and strike this

language from the supplemental bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.