Mr. President, I am honored today to join in a bipartisan

initiative to introduce legislation based upon the recommendations of

the Iraq Study Group. I proudly stand with my distinguished

colleagues--you, Mr. President, as well as Senators Alexander, Bennett,

Pryor, and Gregg--in affirming that this bill will offer a new way

forward for the United States in Iraq.

The detailed recommendations contained in this bill offer a

comprehensive blueprint for renewed diplomacy, restructured economic

assistance, and a redeployment of U.S. military forces in Iraq to

emphasize training and equipping of Iraqi security forces, conducting

limited counterterrorism missions, and protecting our own forces.

These recommendations were issued in December 2006, over 5 months

ago, but, if anything, their utility is even more apparent today.

Our troops should not be refereeing a civil war. And so this Congress

and the President must come together--must come together--to form and

to forge a new path. The Iraq Study Group's final report is the only

comprehensive plan on the table to do that.

I approach this bill from a slightly different perspective than some

of my cosponsors. In fact, I cosponsored the Reid resolution to change

our direction in Iraq, with a goal of completing that redeployment no

later than March of 2008. That position has been reflected in the votes

I have cast, the questions I have asked as a member of the Foreign

Relations Committee at hearings, and the statements I have delivered on

the Senate floor. I strongly opposed the President's decision to

escalate the number of combat troops in Iraq. For that reason, I voted

for the first supplemental bill sent to the President's desk which

called for a more restricted U.S. military mission and a phased

redeployment of our combat forces from Iraq.

A majority of Congress has made clear their desire to change course.

Yet unless we achieve a more bipartisan consensus in the Congress that

change is necessary, an impasse will continue and our troops will

continue to pay the price. It is for that reason I believe the Iraq

Study Group's prescribed course of action represents our best hope for

a bipartisan consensus in an approach to wind down this combat role in

Iraq and successfully transition our mission there.

The members of this Iraq Study Group included foreign policy and

military experts, as well as other distinguished Americans with

impressive experience in public service.

There is no challenge greater than determining how the United States

can salvage our effort in Iraq in a manner that protects our core

national interests, that does right by the Iraqi people, and enables

our troops, who have accomplished every mission they have been given

over the past 4 years, to come home finally.

After months of study and focused deliberations with almost 200

experts, including leading U.S. and Iraqi Government officials and

regional scholars, the Iraq Study Group released last December a

detailed report with 79 recommendations. This report prescribed a

comprehensive diplomatic, political, and economic strategy that

includes sustained engagement with regional neighbors and the

international community in a collective effort to bring stability to

Iraq.

There are a few recommendations in the Iraq Study Group report that

I, in fact, disagree with personally. But the comprehensive plan put

forth by the group, and particularly the elements emphasized in our

bill, represents the best thinking we have on how to resolve the Iraq

dilemma in the long run.

Time is running out to change course in Iraq. In Pennsylvania, 166

men and women have died. Yesterday we learned 9 Americans were killed

in a series of attacks across Iraq. Meanwhile, we continue to search

for two American soldiers taken hostage, and at the same time we hear

the grim news that the body of a third missing U.S. soldier was

identified yesterday.

It is time for a change, and I know of no more detailed proposal, no

more exhaustively researched set of recommendations and findings and no

more comprehensive solution than that offered by the Iraq Study Group.

This bill, brought forward by a bipartisan group of Senators, with a

diverse set of perspectives and opinions, transforms the

recommendations of this group into the declared policy of the U.S.

Government.

This bill offers our best chance to forge a change of direction at

long last in Iraq and to do so in a fashion that, indeed, brings our

Nation together.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.