Mr. President, I thank the Senator from New Hampshire.

I can think of no two Senators on our side of the aisle whose words are

listened to more carefully and more respectfully than the Senator from

New Hampshire and the Senator from Utah. I salute the Senator from

Pennsylvania for his statement and leadership, and the Senator from

Arkansas, who spoke so constructively, and especially the Senator from

Colorado, who is the principal sponsor of this legislation and whom I

am proud to join.

Senator Pryor is exactly right when he said this morning that it is

time for us to stop having partisan votes on Iraq. If I were an

American fighting in Iraq, I would be looking back at us and wondering:

What are they doing in Washington, DC, arguing and sniping at each

other while we are fighting and dying? I would be thinking: If they are

going to send us to Iraq to do a job, at least they could agree on what

the job is.

We owe it to our troops and to our country to find a bipartisan

consensus to support where we go from here in Iraq. We need a political

solution in Washington, DC, as much as we need a political solution in

Baghdad.

The announcements today by four more Senators, each well respected--

Senators Pryor, Bennett, Casey, Gregg--suggests the recommendations of

the Iraq Study Group is the way to do that. Three Republicans, three

Democrats from the North, South, East, and West, some relatively new

Senators, some who have been here a long time, fresh voices, a fresh

approach for a fresh attitude for this debate. Before the end of the

week, I believe there will be two more Senators--one Democrat, one

Republican. Then in June when we return to Washington, the six or the

eight of us intend to offer the legislation Senator Salazar and I have

drafted to implement the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study

Group.

Today we are only six, perhaps eight--a modest beginning. But even we

six or eight are a more promising bipartisan framework of support for a

new direction in Iraq than we have seen for some time in the Senate.

Those who know the Senate know we usually do our best and most

constructive work when a handful of Senators cross party lines to take

a fresh look at a problem, embrace a new strategy, and try to do what

is right for our country.

We are not going to put hundreds of thousands of American troops into

Iraq. We are not going to get out of Iraq tomorrow, and the current

surge of troops in Baghdad, which we all hope is successful, is not by

itself a strategy for tomorrow. The Iraq Study Group report is a

strategy for tomorrow. It will get the United States out of the combat

business in Iraq and into the support, equipment, and the training

business in a prompt and honorable way. It will reduce the number of

troops in Iraq. Those who stay will be less in harm's way--in more

secure bases, embedded with Iraqi forces. Special forces will stay to

counter al-Qaida. The report says this could--not must but could--

happen in early 2008, depending on circumstances.

The report allows support for General Petraeus and his troops by

specifically authorizing a surge, such as the current surge. Because

there would still be a significant long-term presence in Iraq, it will

signal to the rest of the Middle East to stay out of Iraq.

It aggressively encourages diplomatic efforts. The President of the

United States has spoken well of this report recently, and embraced

parts of it, but it is not his plan. The Democratic majority has

borrowed parts of the Iraq Study Group report, but it is not the

Democratic majority plan. That is why the report has a chance to work.

It has the seeds of a bipartisan consensus.

We six or eight, or hopefully more, will introduce our legislation in

June, making the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group the policy of

our country and inviting the President to submit a plan based upon

those recommendations. I hope President Bush will embrace this

strategy. I hope more Senators will.

It is ironic for the oldest democracy, the United States, to be

lecturing the youngest democracy, Iraq, about coming up with a

political consensus when we, ourselves, can't come up with one. This is

the foremost issue facing our country. The Iraq Study Group report is

the most promising strategy for a solution: getting out of the combat

business in Iraq and into the support, equipping, and training business

in a prompt and honorable way.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.