Mr. President, I rise this morning, first of all, to

congratulate my colleagues. Senator Alexander has worked tirelessly

with us in putting together the legislation on the implementation of

the Iraq Study Group recommendations. He has been a key leader in

trying to pull a group of us together to try to develop a new direction

going forward in Iraq. I thank him for his leadership.

I also wish to thank both Senator Pryor and Senator Casey for joining

us as cosponsors of this legislation. They are people who are trying to

search for a solution on the Democratic side, and I very much

appreciate their efforts. As for Senator Gregg and Senator Bennett, I

appreciate also their statements, their cosponsorship of this

legislation, and their desire to come forward to a solution that might

unite us in the Senate on a way forward.

Let me say at the outset that when we think about what it is we are

trying to do with respect to Iraq at this point in time, we have a lot

of people who are looking backward and saying there are lots of

problems, lots of failures that have happened--from prewar

intelligence, to decisions going into Iraq, to the prosecution of the

war, et cetera--but the fact is we are there now. The fact is, we have

140,000 American troops on the ground in Iraq today. So the real

question for us ought to be, as the Congress, how it is we are going to

move forward together.

I think in the broadest sense there is not a disagreement on what it

is we want. What is the end stake for us in Iraq? We want to bring our

troops home. I think we all would like to have our troops back home,

reunited with their families and out of harm's way. That is the goal we

want to get to. The second goal we want to get to is a stable Iraq and

a stable Middle East. The fact is, Iraq does not stand alone. It is in

a sea of very difficult political turmoil at this point in time. So we

want us to have success in Iraq.

There has been a lot of debate about what it is we ought to have been

doing in Iraq over the last several years. But the only group that has

taken a significant amount of time and thought through the best way

forward in Iraq was the Iraq Study Group. It was this bipartisan group

of leaders, led by former Secretary of State James Baker and

Congressman Hamilton, as cochairs of a bipartisan commission of elder

states men and women, that came up with the most thoughtful,

comprehensive approach on the way forward.

The essence of what that report said is that the Iraqi Government has

a responsibility to move forward and to meet the milestones that are

set forth for success in that report. It says: If you do that, Iraqi

Government, we, the United States, are going to be there to help you.

On the other hand, if you don't do that, we, the United States, are

going to reduce our help to you. It is an effort to put pressure on the

Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people to

deal with the sectarian violence they have in place and to move forward

in a fashion that will create stability in Iraq.

I am hopeful, as we move forward from this day, and by the time we

come back from the Memorial Day break, that besides the six Senators

who have joined as cosponsors of this legislation, we will have

additional cosponsors. At the end of the day, it seems to me that we,

as the Congress, have a responsibility to the men and women who are on

the ground in Iraq to try to find a common way forward.

On the issue of war and peace, there should not be a Republican and

Democratic divide. What we ought to be doing is trying to find a common

way forward where we can bring Democrats and Republicans together to an

understanding of how we will ultimately achieve success in Iraq and

bring our troops home.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague from

Tennessee, Senator Alexander.