Mr. President, for more than 3 years, this Congress, which

has been given the name of the has turned a

blind eye to the intractable war in Iraq, ignoring the administration's

many mistakes and allowing it to stay on a failed course.

Here we are, with 6 days left in the 109th Congress, and the

Republicans, who control the House and Senate and the White House, have

not held one hearing--not one--into the President's wartime failures.

During the Civil War, President Lincoln was faced continually with

oversight hearings by his Congress. Of course, we know during World War

II, there were a number of commissions. The most famous was that

conducted by Senator Harry Truman of Missouri, which led to his

becoming Vice President. Some say, but for that he would not have been

chosen as Vice President. What was the Truman Commission? It was to

determine what was going on with World War II. Was money being wasted?

Were troop levels right? Korean war hearings were also held, and the

same for the Vietnam war. But for this war, none--even though this war

has taken longer than it took to settle the differences in the European

theater in World War II. Soon it will be the same amount of time that

we were able to beat Japan.

This Republican Congress has wasted 20 months on horse slaughtering;

the Schiavo case, dealing with someone's personal relationship, which

should not even have been before this body; gay marriage; the nuclear

option; flag burning; repealing the estate tax. But they could not find

a day for some time to look at the President's mistakes, missteps, and

misconduct, which have hurt American security and plunged Iraq into a

civil war--not a day.

Yesterday's Washington Post newspaper brought the latest indictment

of the Bush incompetence in Iraq, in a front-page story entitled ``Ties

to GOP Trumped Know-How Among Staff Sent to Rebuild Iraq.'' Mr.

President, this article says a lot of things, but here is some of it:

It is interesting to note that the person selected to do this is a

man by the name of O'Beirne. I saw that name and it flashed because I

have been on programs with a woman by the name of Kate O'Beirne. And

I'll be darned, it happened to be her husband who was chosen to find

the people to take care of postwar Iraq.

Here are some of the questions that were asked of the applicants:

They even asked questions

about how the applicant felt about Roe v. Wade. People being

interviewed for purposes of helping rebuild war-damaged Iraq were asked

questions on Roe v. Wade. The questions had nothing to do with one's

competence, their educational background, or their experience. The

article says that

to do what he was required to do. It says:

The article also says:

People were sent there with no background, no education, no academic

experience, and set out to create a flat tax in Iraq.

They were interested

Mr. President, this picture says it all. Here is Paul Bremmer. They

dumped General Garner after a few weeks and brought Bremmer in. Here he

is, on his throne--on his throne. He is on a throne surrounded by

Iraqis.

I will be happy to yield for a question.

The answer is, yes, he received that. I assume one would

expect that from somebody who had a throne while he was over there.

That is true.

I don't think he did. Even though he was doing a heck of a

job, I don't think he obtained a medal from the White House.

The article goes on to say--and I say to my friend and

anyone within the sound of my voice:

I am not making this up. This is hard to comprehend.

I will be happy to.

It started out at $18 billion. But as the Senator from

Illinois will remember, part of that money, stacks of one-hundred-

dollar bills, was used by some of the contractors who were sent over

there to play football games--some of these same people.

I say to my friend, this war is approaching 3\1/2\ years,

and there has not been a single congressional oversight hearing on the

conduct of the war. This war has now cost us, the American taxpayers,

about $325 billion. There has not been a single congressional oversight

hearing on the war.

I say to my friend, I spent the weekend reading a book. I

did other things. I spent a lot of time on an airplane. The book is

called ``Fiasco,'' written by a man named Thomas Ricks who has spent

his life covering the military. He has written books on the military. I

don't know his political persuasion. This book is on the best seller's

list of the New York Times.

In this book, he talks in such detail about what has happened as a

result of the incompetence of this administration to our valiant

fighting men and women over there. I recommend the book to anyone. It

is a searing indictment of this administration. It is in keeping with

what this article is all about.

Another paragraph:

One staffer said:

Mr. President, this is really a sad commentary. Important jobs, such

as rebuilding the Iraq stock exchange, were given to applicants who

agreed with the President on Roe v. Wade. Qualified individuals were

turned down for jobs if they didn't vote for Bush in 2000. The children

of the President's conservative friends were given authority over the

country's $13 billion budget.

Today in Iraq we are witnessing the terrible consequences of Bush

cronyism, and it is our troops, the Iraqi people, and the American

people who are paying the price.

Reconstruction has been a failure. The economy is a mess. Thousands

are dying. Whole provinces have been lost. One province, Anbar

Province, makes up a third of the country. The military people said it

is gone. And the political solution necessary to bring Americans home

is nowhere to be found.

The testimony we hear from people such as the people in this

newspaper article is unbelievable. We have heard it time and again. The

only people who aren't listening are George Bush and this do-nothing

Congress.

If the Iraq war has taught us anything, it is that Congress must take

seriously its responsibility to hold the executive branch accountable,

and it has not happened. For 2 years, Democrats have offered

constructive solutions to change course in Iraq and give our troops and

the Iraqi people the chance for some type of stability and success. We

have said there must be a redeployment of forces this year to

transition the mission, to change the mission.

We have said we must resolve the sectarian differences through a

political settlement. That is called diplomacy. They need to amend

their constitution.

We said they must regionalize the conflict with a contact group or

conference to bring in those countries that said they will help.

We need to revitalize, and we can do that as I have indicated: get

the countries that said they would help to come in and help. There

needs to be a regional solution. We need to rebuild our badly strained

U.S. military. There is not a single undeployed Army unit today that is

battle ready. That says it all.

A number of generals have witnessed this administration's flawed Iraq

policy firsthand, and they have repeatedly called for new civilian

leadership at the Pentagon.

I say this with all due respect: I bet if those military personnel

weren't working for Government defense contracts, we would have a few

more speaking out. But we have had plenty.

In each instance, when the generals speak out, the Republican

Congress blocks their efforts and puts their political interests ahead

of America's safety.

The war in Iraq has been a diversion from the real war on terror. But

this administration and this do-nothing Congress are content to stay

the course, even as it makes America less safe and Iraq less stable.

We need a new direction. This Congress has failed.

I yield the floor.