Mr. President, what I want to talk about, in addition to

the prescription drug issue, is the notion that--at the end of last

week it was addressed--we would probably need more money for the

military with respect to the fighting that is occurring in Iraq and

Afghanistan. This Congress passed a supplemental emergency bill that

was nearly $87 billion--I believe it was just under $87 billion--some

months ago. We were told that would take us through the end of this

calendar year and perhaps even a bit more.

The President's budget that was sent to us contained zero money

requested for the activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. The reason the

President recommended there would be no funding in the regular budget

for Iraq and Afghanistan is because he and the administration said they

could not estimate what it would cost; therefore, they recommend zero.

We know it is not zero. We know we are spending $5 billion a month--

$4 billion in Iraq and $1 billion in Afghanistan. If we are spending $5

billion a month or $60 billion a year, it is unfathomable to me that we

get a budget request from the President that says,

Late last week we heard perhaps more money will be needed than was

otherwise expected and that Congress would be asked to appropriate this

on an emergency basis.

It is clear to me we will do whatever is necessary to protect the

safety of the troops we have sent to Iraq. There is no question but

that when we ask American men and women in uniform to fight for this

country and to defend this country's interest and then to send them

overseas, there is no question we have an obligation to protect them

and provide for their safety. If they need more equipment, if we need

to spend more money to provide for their safety, this Congress, in my

judgment, is going to do that.

Let me make a point about all of this. In addition to providing the

supplemental emergency funding that was necessary for the Pentagon some

months ago--almost 6 months ago now--we also were requested by the

President to appropriate $20.3 billion for reconstructing Iraq.

I offered an amendment in the Senate to strike that spending. It was

the largest proposed spending cut for this fiscal year that was offered

in the Congress. The single largest spending cut that was offered last

year is one I offered on the floor of the Senate to strike the $20.3

billion for reconstructing Iraq.

I came up short. I had over 40 votes for the amendment, but,

nonetheless, it did not prevail. I want to explain why I did that and

why it has relevance today.

I proposed striking that funding for a very simple reason: We did not

target Iraq's infrastructure. When we decided to displace Saddam

Hussein and send American troops to Iraq, we did not

target their roads, bridges, dams, or electric grid. That is not what

we targeted. We did not try to bomb Iraq in a way that destroyed their

infrastructure.

It is my judgment the American taxpayers should not be required to

rebuild the Iraq infrastructure. Iraq has the second largest reserves

of oil in the world, next only to Saudi Arabia. In fact, one of the

troops who came back from Iraq with the National Guard unit from North

Dakota told me one day he was standing in an area in Iraq, in some

sandy area, and the bottom of his boots became black with oil.

There is a great deal of oil in the country of Iraq. I believe, based

on Ambassador Bremer's testimony of how much oil they would be pumping

this year and next year, that when they get to 3 million barrels of oil

a day, which is something they will reach very soon, they will have $16

billion of net export value of oil in Iraq--$16 billion a year. That is

$160 billion of net export value of oil in 10 years. That is above and

beyond that which they need to use in Iraq.

It seems to me with respect to the reconstruction of Iraq, it makes a

great deal of sense for a country with the second largest reserves of

oil in the world to be told the Iraq people ought to use Iraqi oil to

reconstruct Iraq. It is not the job or the burden or the responsibility

of the American people to reconstruct Iraq.

I lost that debate in the Senate and lost the vote. So now we have

just under $20 billion available to reconstruct Iraq. There is a very

thick booklet that describes the reconstruction of Iraq. There is a

jobs program for Iraq paid for by the American taxpayers. There is a

housing program for Iraq paid for by the American taxpayers. There is a

highway program for Iraq, a health care program for Iraq, a security

program for Iraq, all paid for by American taxpayers. There is marsh

restoration and there is the creation of ZIP codes, all paid for by the

American taxpayers.

Since I lost that vote on the floor of the Senate and since nearly

$20 billion was then appropriated for the reconstruction of Iraq, paid

for by the American taxpayers, I have watched the progress of that

reconstruction and I noticed, for example, some of the things that were

happening in Iraq with respect to expenditures. I have been bothered

about it, but nonetheless I had my vote and I lost that vote.

Then last week, I learned we are short of money for the troops in

Iraq, and it is very likely an emergency supplemental request will need

to be passed by the Congress and, indeed, we will pass it if it is

necessary to support the troops in Iraq. I checked and discovered at

the last count, somewhere close to $17 billion--$16-plus billion--

remains unspent with respect to the reconstruction funds that were

appropriated by the Congress for Iraq. It seems to me what we ought to

do is transfer that unexpended reconstruction funding and use it for

the benefit of the support of the American troops in Iraq.

If, in fact, we are short of money, if we are going to need to expend

additional emergency funds in Iraq, why not use the funds that are

unspent at this point for the reconstruction of Iraq and, indeed, use

that for the support of the American troops in Iraq, and then engage

the Iraqi government--first of all the provisional government and,

second, the government that takes effect on July 1--and have that

government securitize future production of Iraqi oil and raise their

own funds to reconstruct this country. It is their job, not the job of

the American taxpayers, to have a program for housing, health care,

jobs, and highways in the country of Iraq. That ought not be the burden

of the American taxpayer.

When we have a fiscal policy that is desperately out of balance and

we are borrowing money at a record pace--$530 billion this year alone--

I think it is responsible for us to take a look at how we might ease

that burden and at least one small portion of that ought to be to

revisit this proposition of a reconstruction fund for Iraq. A

substantial amount of that money is as yet unspent.

Incidentally, while I am on the subject, let me also say with respect

to the military funding, we need to do a much better job with that

expenditure. I noticed, for example, the Halliburton Corporation--I

held a hearing on this subject in the Democratic Policy Committee a

couple of months ago--the Halliburton Corporation has had to now

restore funding for kickbacks they made for inappropriate expenditures.

Here is a company, for example, that was billing the U.S. Government,

the Defense Department--therefore, the U.S. taxpayers--they were

billing us for serving 42,000 meals a day. The problem was they were

only making 14,000 meals a day for the American troops. Somehow 28,000

meals got lost. They were overbilling by 28,000 meals a day. I come

from a small town of about 300 people. I can understand somebody

overbilling for 10 meals, maybe 100 meals, but 28,000 meals a day? That

is absurd.

That is the sort of thing that the American taxpayer reads about and

is angry about, and should be because there is a substantial amount of

money being wasted, yes, even in these defense contracts. That is

something the American taxpayers expect better of with respect to the

use of their funds.

I want to come back to this central point. I think it is time we

revisit this question of reconstruction funds for Iraq. I suggest we do

that by deciding that which is yet unspent be used to support the

American troops because we are told there is not sufficient money to do

that at this point, and I believe, because it is not the American

taxpayers' burden to reconstruct Iraq but it is the American taxpayers'

burden to support troops who we have asked to go in harm's way on our

behalf, that this would represent a positive step and would also help

with fiscal policy that now is creating the largest deficits in

history.

We will be on the subject of the Internet tax issue soon, and I will

have more to say on that subject later, but in the meantime I yield the

floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.