Mr. President, I, too, am confident that we will pass

important legislation on a bipartisan basis this week to provide the

benefits to veterans that they have earned and that they deserve, but

we can't forget the unfinished business of this Congress last December

when we wrapped up the fiscal year 2008 appropriations bill and we left

a balance of more than $100 billion that the Department of Defense said

it needed to fight the global war on terror.

In other words, it is important to support our veterans, but I would

submit it is equally important to make sure we are supporting our

troops currently in the fight and in harm's way, and this Congress has

an unfortunate record of delaying that and playing political games with

that money. It is time that should end.

In the Army alone, this shortfall amounts to $66 billion. As a

result, the Army will run out of pay for Active Duty and National Guard

soldiers in June unless Congress acts promptly.

At the same time, funding for extra vehicle armor, hospital

construction and renovation, and new service vehicles will dry up. Our

troops will not have the resources they need to carry out their mission

unless we act soon to pass this emergency supplemental appropriation.

Provincial reconstruction teams will also run out of funding. These

teams are an integral part of our strategy in Iraq and go a long way to

fostering growth, freedom, and good ties to the Iraqi communities and

ensuring we win the battle for hearts and minds as well.

We have also appropriated less than half of what the military leaders

in Iraq tell us they need for the Commanders' Emergency Response

Program, or CERP, which is essential for continued bottom-up

reconciliation efforts. We should not hold this funding hostage to

political gains, and it should not become a vessel for porkbarrel

projects and bloated spending.

We should pass a clean emergency supplemental funding bill for our

troops as soon as we possibly can, and I hope immediately following the

passage of this legislation we are on today.