Another issue about which I will share some thoughts

with my colleagues today is my hope--and I think it is shared by our

entire Nation--that this election in Iraq is the beginning of a new

era, beginning of a greater era of stability and opportunity for the

United States to diminish its presence in that very troubled place.

My own oldest son served in combat in Iraq, and I appreciate

profoundly the sacrifices and the risks and the courage of so many who

have served our Nation there and in other dangerous places around the

world.

We have this hope while at the same time recognizing that one

election does not a democracy make; that the potential for ongoing

violence, for chaos in many parts of that difficult country remain, and

the election will be viewed more credibly by some than by others. I am

pleased the turnout seems to be significant, seems to be supportive,

certainly, in the Kurdish and Shiite regions; less so in the Sunni

areas where most of the violence has centered. Nonetheless, it is our

hope this is a beginning, a start, at least, to the point where we can

begin to take troops at some near rather than later time back home to

the United States.

We have paid a dear price. We are expending in the range of $2

billion per week in Iraq, in a country that was a regional threat, was

not involved in international terror, but which was a regional threat

to its neighbors at one time. It certainly is our hope the efforts that

are ongoing there will lead to the ``Iraqification,'' if you will, of

that country and the development of some self-governance in Iraq. The

expenditure has been immense. We have not seen President Bush's budget

for the next fiscal year yet. I am told to anticipate we will be

spending $1 billion per minute on defense. This is a remarkable

undertaking, an obligation that we are going to have to deal with. It

is my hope we will in the future approach these conflicts with a

greater

eye toward multilateralism, toward cooperation with our allies--whether

it be NATO, the U.N. or other regional security groups--and that we

understand the reality that it is much easier to win wars than it is to

win peace. It is certainly our hope that perhaps today marks some

beginning in the progress toward if not peace, at least greater peace

and greater stability than currently exists in that nation.

I commend the troops who have served with such courage and such

distinction, their families. I have contacted two South Dakota parents

just today about the loss of their sons' lives. It is something that

strikes home to me in a very profound way because of the experience of

my own son. These families will never be the same. These losses are

devastating. We sometimes see the numbers in the newspapers and treat

it as though it were just another daily event, but each and every day

these losses constitute a life-shattering experience for so many

parents, so many families, so many spouses, so many children. We should

never look lightly on the contributions, the courage, the distinction,

the professionalism exhibited by these troops, and let us, as a Senate,

do still more to see to it that to the degree we put these young men

and women in harm's way we do so selectively where no other recourse is

realistic and that when they are in harm's way they have the equipment,

the ammunition, the body armor, the other resources they need to

minimize what is already an enormous risk to each and every one of them

each day they serve in that country.

I express gratitude to our troops, their families, and caution that

we still have a long way to go. The administration has indicated we may

have troops in Iraq for another 5 years. I hope it is not that long. I

hope we can see progress that will allow us to get every single one of

our troops home sooner rather than later; that we can get this massive

expenditure off the shoulders of America's taxpayers and be able to

devote more of those dollars to the domestic needs we have in the

United States, but at the same time recognizing yesterday was a day of

some hope and expectation that perhaps better times will come in Iraq.

I yield the floor.