Mr. President, first let me thank the Senator from

Massachusetts for his moving and sobering words but even more

importantly for his leadership and tremendous clarity on this issue

over these last few critical years.

Mr. President, we are approaching the 4-year anniversary of one of

the greatest foreign policy mistakes in our country's history. In March

2003, with the prior authorization of Congress, the President took this

country to war in Iraq. Almost 4 years later, virtually every objective

observer and, more importantly, the American people as a whole agree

that the President's policy has failed. Even the President acknowledges

that his plan has not worked, though his solution is not a new plan but

a troop escalation. Of course, sending more troops to implement what is

essentially the same flawed strategy makes no sense. The American

people agree that it makes no sense, and most of my colleagues agree

that it makes no sense.

So the question becomes, with a President unable or unwilling to fix

a flawed policy that is jeopardizing our national security and our

military readiness, what should we in Congress do about our country's

involvement in this disastrous war? Do we do nothing and hope the

President will put things right, when he has shown time and time again

that he is incapable of doing so? Do we simply tell the President that

we are unhappy with the way the war is going and that we hope he will

change course or do we take strong, decisive action to fix the

President's mistaken, self-defeating policies?

It is pretty clear which course of action I support. I think it is a

course of action the American people called for in the November

elections. It is the course of action our national security needs, so

we do not continue to neglect global threats and challenges while we

focus so much of our resources and our efforts on Iraq. It is the

course of action that will support--that will actually support--our

brave troops and their families.

We must end our involvement in this tragic and misguided war. The

President will not do so; therefore, Congress must act. So far,

Congress has not lived up to that responsibility. Instead of taking

strong action in the Senate, instead of considering binding legislation

that fixes the President's flawed Iraq strategy, we tied ourselves into

knots last week in a convoluted and misguided effort to achieve a

consensus that would have essentially reaffirmed congressional

authorization for continuing our military involvement in Iraq. Of

course, here I am referring to the resolution proposed by the senior

Senator from Virginia. This resolution was portrayed, at least at

first, by members of both parties as an important symbolic rebuke of

the President's Iraq policy. In fact, it really was not a rebuke at

all. In parts, it reads like a reauthorization of the war, rejecting

troop redeployment and specifically authorizing ``vigorous operations''

in a critical region in Iraq.

Now, when debate on the Warner resolution was blocked, we had a

chance

to get things right. And I am glad our majority leader, Senator Reid,

has chosen to bring up the resolution being debated in the House today

expressing support for the troops and, simply, opposition to the so-

called surge. Now, this body--the Senate--should go on record in

opposition to, or support of, the President's plan.

I will vote to allow the debate on the resolution to take place. And

I hope I will have the opportunity to actually vote for the resolution.

I have yet to hear any convincing argument that sending 21,500 more

troops to Iraq will bring about the political solution that is needed

to end violence in that country.

The President's decision to send more troops is based on two flawed

assumptions. It assumes, first, that the presence of even more of our

servicemembers will help Iraqi troops improve security in Baghdad and,

second, that with improved security, Iraqi politicians can then achieve

national reconciliation. The recent declassified NIE, or National

Intelligence Estimate, shot holes in both of those assumptions. It said

that Iraqi security forces ``will be hard pressed in the next 12-18

months to execute significantly increased security responsibilities''

and ``even if violence is diminished, given the current winner-take-all

attitude and sectarian animosities infecting the political scene, Iraqi

leaders will be hard pressed to achieve sustained political

reconciliation in the time frame of this Estimate.''

Obviously, those were direct quotes, not me characterizing the NIE.

In other words, in the best case scenario, U.S. forces provide a little

security that Iraqi forces can't sustain on their own and that Iraqi

politicians won't use to settle their entrenched differences. That

doesn't sound to me like a plan for success.

Some of my colleagues, even those who don't support sending more

troops to Baghdad, have spoken in favor of continued and even increased

U.S. military operations in Al Anbar Province. Some of them even

suggest that our troops should be directly combating an insurgency

there. This, apart from everything else, is a recipe for disaster. Al

Anbar Province is where a majority of U.S. troops have been killed in

Iraq. The insurgency there, as well as general opposition to the U.S.

presence and to the Shiite-dominated Government in Baghdad, is fueled

by the Sunnis' political and economic grievances. Conducting targeted

missions to take out terrorists makes sense, but using U.S. troops to

put down an insurgency doesn't. Maintaining or, worse yet, increasing a

substantial U.S. presence in a primarily Sunni area without a political

solution means nothing less than a continuation of unending and self-

defeating policies in Iraq. Clearly, the President's decision to send

more troops makes no sense. But I have to say that simply passing a

nonbinding resolution criticizing it makes no sense, either, if we just

stop there. So we need to go further, and we need to do it soon.

Let me remind my colleagues, when the voters rejected the President's

Iraq policy in November, they weren't rejecting an escalation. That

option wasn't even on the table then. Who was talking about an

escalation during that campaign? Certainly, the Presiding Officer knows

well what was being discussed. They were rejecting the President's

policy of trying to achieve a political solution in Iraq with a massive

and unlimited military presence. After delaying action for a couple of

months, the President just plain ignored overwhelming public sentiment,

the advice of Members of both parties, and the views of the military

and foreign policy experts when he proposed an escalation. The

administration turned its back on the American people.

We in Congress should not follow suit. We have a responsibility to

our constituents and to our men and women in uniform. If no one will

listen to and act on the will of the American people, then there is

something seriously wrong with our political system. After almost 4

years of a disastrous policy, we must bring our troops out of Iraq. To

do otherwise is to ignore public outrage over the war and to ignore the

many other pressing national security priorities we are neglecting in

favor of a myopic focus on Iraq. The American people recognize there is

no U.S. military solution to Iraq's civil war. And as long as we focus

disproportionate attention and resources on Iraq, we will not be able

to counter the full range of threats we face in places such as

Afghanistan and Somalia and many other places around the world. So

Congress must use its power. It must use its power of the purse to

safely redeploy our troops from Iraq.

Let's not be intimidated by the intentionally misleading rhetoric of

the White House and its allies when they try to prevent any discussion

at all of real action by the Congress to end the war. This isn't about

cutting off funds for troops; it is about cutting off funds for the

war. Every Member of Congress agrees that we must continue to support

our troops and give them the resources and the support they need. By

setting a date after which funding for the war will be terminated, as I

have proposed, Congress can safely bring our troops out of harm's way.

That is how you get them out of harm's way, by getting them out of

there.

There is plenty of precedent for Congress exercising its

constitutional authority to stop U.S. involvement in armed conflict.

Last month, I chaired a Judiciary Committee hearing entitled

``Exercising Congress's Constitutional Power to End the War.'' Without

exception, every witness, those called by the majority and the

minority, those who have had a career more focused on the executive

branch than the legislative branch--all of them did not challenge the

constitutionality of Congress's authority to end the war.

Lou Fisher of the Library of Congress is acclaimed as one of the

foremost experts on the President's war powers. In fact, he literally

wrote the book on this topic. He testified that Congress does not

simply have the power, he said it has the responsibility to exercise

it, when needed.

The argument that cutting off funding for a flawed policy would hurt

the troops and that continuing to put U.S. troops in harm's way

supports the troops makes no sense. By ending funding for the war, we

can bring our troops safely out of Iraq.

Walter Dellinger of Duke Law School made this point when he testified

about my proposal.

Instead of allowing the President's failed policy to continue,

Congress can and should use its power of the purse to end our

involvement in the Iraq war, safely redeploying the troops while

ensuring, as do I in my bill, that important counterterrorism and

training missions are still carried out. We should be coming up with a

strategy for a postredeployment Iraq and the region that is squarely

within the context of the global fight against al-Qaida. That means

replacing a massive and unsustainable and unlimited military mission

with a long-term strategy for mitigating the mess left behind by this

war. With such a strategy, we can redirect substantially more resources

and attention to the fight against al-Qaida and other affiliated or

sympathetic international terrorist organizations.

As long as this President goes unchecked by Congress, our troops will

remain needlessly at risk and our national security will be

compromised.

Let me tell my colleagues, regardless of what happens with this

resolution, this is just a first step--worthwhile but just a first

step. And the first step must be followed by stronger steps, and it

must be done quickly. I intend to keep pushing until the Senate votes

to end our involvement in the Iraq war, and eventually this will happen

because this is what a strong majority of the American people want.

Congress may be able to put off its day of reckoning temporarily, the

administration can continue down the same failed path a while longer,

but all of us ignore the will of the American people at our peril. So

let's have this debate. Let's do it openly and honestly. Let's not

pretend anyone wants to deny our troops

the equipment and resources they need. Let's not suggest that opposing

the President's strategy is unpatriotic and that it would give aid and

comfort to the enemy, that it would somehow weaken the resolve of our

troops. Those claims are outrageous. They are offensive, and they are

untrue. Do my colleagues believe the American people gave aid and

comfort to the enemy when they rejected the President's Iraq policy in

November? Are the overwhelming majority of our constituents who oppose

this war trying to undermine our troops? Of course not. So how could

anyone suggest that Congress actually acting on the will of the

American people undermines the troops or emboldens the enemy?

Our troops are undermined by a policy that places them in harm's way

unnecessarily. And our enemy, our true enemy, al-Qaida and its allies,

is emboldened by a U.S. strategy that neglects global challenges and

instead focuses on a single country. It is unfortunate that those who

wish to defend this strategy would resort to these kinds of charges.

Let's do the job of the Senate and have full, open debate and votes

on fixing our Iraq policy. Let's not pretend that such a debate would

harm our national security. Let's not tell ourselves that it is up to

just the President to fix the horrible situation his failed policies

have created. It is our responsibility to act, too. Congress made the

tragic mistake of authorizing this war over 4 years ago. Now Congress

also has the job of bringing it to a close so we can refocus on the

terrorists and other global threats that have been neglected way too

much over the past 4 years.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.