Mr. President, when the roll is called tomorrow on the

motion for cloture with regard to the resolution the House is expected

to pass tonight on Iraq, I will vote no. I will vote against cloture. I

will do so not because I wish to stifle debate. The fact is that debate

has occurred, it is occurring now, and it will continue to occur on our

policy in Iraq.

I will vote against cloture because I feel so strongly against the

resolution. It condemns the new plan for success in Iraq. I support

that plan. It does something that, from all of the research my staff

and I have done, including asking the Library of Congress, we have

found no case in American history where Congress has done what this

resolution does, which is, in a nonbinding resolution, oppose a plan

our military is implementing right now. Congress has expressed

nonbinding resolutions of disapproval before a plan of military action

has been carried out.

Congress has obviously taken much more direct steps, authorized to do

so by the Constitution, to cut off funds for a military action or a war

in progress. But never before has the Congress of the United States

passed a nonbinding resolution of disapproval of a military plan that

is already being carried out by American military personnel. I believe

it is a bad precedent, and that is why I will do everything I can to

oppose it. In the immediate context, that means I will vote against

cloture.

Mr. President, more broadly, we are approaching an important moment

in the history of this institution and of our Republic, a moment I fear

future historians will look back to and see the beginning of a cycle

that not only damaged the remaining possibilities for success America

has in Iraq but, more broadly, established political precedents that

weaken the power of the Presidency to protect the American people over

the long term.

The nonbinding resolution before us today, we all know, is only a

prologue. That is why the fight over it, procedural and substantive,

over these past weeks has been so intense. It is the first skirmish in

an escalating battle that threatens to consume our Government over many

months ahead, a battle that will neither solve the sprawling challenges

we face in Iraq nor strengthen our Nation to defeat the challenges to

our security throughout the world from Islamist extremists--that is to

say, in our war against the terrorists who attacked us.

We still have a choice not to go down this path. It is a choice that

goes beyond the immediate resolution that will be before the Senate, a

chance to step back from the brink and find better ways to express and

arbitrate our differences of opinion. I hope we will seize the moment

and take those steps.

Mr. President, as we meet in this Chamber today, the battle for

Baghdad has already begun. One of our most decorated generals, David

Petraeus, whom this Senate confirmed 81 to 0 a few weeks ago, has now

taken command in Baghdad.

Thousands of American soldiers have moved out across the Iraqi

capital putting their lives on the line as they put a new strategy into

effect. We can now see for ourselves on the ground in Iraq, in Baghdad,

where it matters what this new strategy looks like. And we can see why

it is different from all that preceded it.

For the first time in Baghdad, our primary focus is no longer on

training Iraqi forces or chasing down insurgents or providing for our

own force protection, though those remain objectives. Our primary focus

is on ensuring basic security for the Iraqi people working side by side

with Iraqi security forces, exactly what classic counterinsurgency

doctrine tells us must be our first goal now.

Where previously there were not enough troops to hold the

neighborhoods cleared of insurgents, now more troops are either in

place or on the way. Where previously American soldiers were based on

the outskirts of Baghdad unable to secure the city, now they are living

and working side by side with their Iraqi counterparts on small bases

that are being set up right now throughout the Iraqi capital.

At least six of these new joint bases have already been established

in the Sunni neighborhoods in west Baghdad, the same neighborhoods

where a few weeks ago jihadists and death squads held sway. In the

Shiite neighborhoods of east Baghdad, American troops are also moving

in with their Iraqi counterparts, and Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi

Army are moving out.

We do not know if this new strategy for success in Iraq will work

over the long term, and we probably will not know for some time. The

Mahdi Army may be in retreat for the moment, but they are not defeated.

They have gone to ground, and they are watching. Our hope, of course,

is that our determination and that of the Iraqi Government will lead

them now to devote themselves to politics instead of death squads, but

only time will tell.

The fact is any realistic assessment of the situation in Iraq tells

us we must expect there will be more attacks and there will be more

casualties in the months ahead as the enemies of a free and independent

Iraq see the progress we are making and adapt to try to destroy it with

more violence.

The question they will pose to us, which is the question that is

posed every time a fanatic suicide bomb goes off and that person

expresses their hatred of everyone else more than love of their own

life by ending their own life, is: Will we yield Baghdad, Iraq, the

Middle East, our own future to those fanatical suicide bombers?

We must also recognize we are in a different place in Iraq from where

we were a month ago because of the implementation of this new strategy.

We are in a stronger position today to provide basic security in

Baghdad, and with that, we are in a stronger position to marginalize

the extremists and strengthen the moderates, a stronger position to

foster the economic activity that will drain the insurgency and the

militias of their public support, a stronger position to press the

Iraqi leaders to make the political compromises that everyone

acknowledges are necessary.

In the real world, in the past month, the facts in Iraq have changed,

and they are changing still. I ask my colleagues to allow themselves to

wait and consider changing their minds as further facts unfold in Iraq.

The nonbinding resolution before us is not about stopping a

hypothetical plan. It is about disapproving a plan that is being

carried out now by our fellow

Americans in uniform in the field. In that sense, as I have said, it is

unprecedented in congressional history, in American history.

This resolution is about shouting into the wind. It is about ignoring

the realities of what is happening on the ground in Baghdad. It

proposes nothing. It contains no plan for victory or retreat. It is a

strategy of ``no,'' while our soldiers are saying ``yes, sir,'' to

their commanding officers as they go forward into battle. And that is

why I will vote against the resolution by voting against cloture.

I understand the frustration, the anger, and the exhaustion that so

many Americans, so many Members of this Congress feel about Iraq, the

desire to throw up one's hands and simply say ``enough.'' And I am

painfully aware of the enormous toll of this war in human life and of

the mistakes that have been made in the war's conduct. But let us now

not make another mistake. In the midst of a fluid and uncertain

situation in Iraq, we should not be so bound up in our own arguments

and disagreements, so committed to the positions we have staked out

that the political battle over here takes precedence over the real

battle over there.

Whatever the passions of the moment, the point of reference for our

decisionmaking should be military movements on the battlefields of

Iraq, not political maneuverings in the Halls of Congress.

Even as our troops have begun to take Baghdad back step by step,

there are many in this Congress who have, nevertheless, already reached

a conclusion about the futility of America's cause there and declared

their intention to put an end to this mission, not with one direct

attempt to cut off funds but step by political step.

No matter what the rhetoric of this resolution, that is the reality

of this moment. This nonbinding measure before us is a first step

toward a constitutional crisis that we can and must avoid. Let me

explain what I mean by ``a constitutional crisis.'' Let us be clear

about the likely consequences if we go down this path beyond this

nonbinding resolution.

Congress has been given constitutional responsibilities, but the

micromanagement of wars is not one of them. The appropriation of funds

for war is. I appreciate that each of us has our own ideas about the

best way forward in Iraq. I respect those who take a different position

than I. I understand many feel strongly that the President's strategy

is the wrong one, but the Constitution, which has served us now for

more than two great centuries of our history, creates not 535

Commanders in Chief but 1, the President of the United States, who is

authorized to lead the day-to-day conduct of war.

Whatever our preponderance of this war or its conduct, it is in no

one's interest to stumble into a debilitating confrontation between our

two great branches of Government over war powers. The potential for a

constitutional crisis here and now is real, with congressional

interventions, Presidential vetoes, and Supreme Court decisions.

If there was ever a moment for nonpartisan cooperation to agree on a

process that will respect both our personal opinions about this war and

our Nation's interests over the long term, this is it.

We need to step back from the brink and reason together, as Scripture

urges us to do, about how we will proceed to express our disagreements

about this war. We must recognize that while the decisions we are

making today and we are about to make seem irretrievably bound up in

the immediacy of this moment, and the particular people now holding

positions of power in our Government, these decisions will set

constitutional precedents that will go far beyond the moment and these

people.

President Bush has less than 2 years left in office, and a Democrat

may well succeed him. If we do not act thoughtfully in the weeks and

months ahead, we will establish precedents that future Congresses,

future Presidents, and future generations of Americans will regret.

Right now, as the battle for Baghdad begins, this institution is

obviously deeply divided. However, we should not allow our divisions to

lead us to a constitutional crisis in which no one wins and our

national security is greatly damaged.

We are engaged, as all my colleagues know, in a larger war against a

totalitarian enemy, Islamist extremism, and terrorism that seeks to

vanquish all the democratic values that is our national purpose to

protect and defend.

Whatever our differences in this Chamber about this war, let us never

forget those great values of freedom and democracy that unite us and

for which our troops have given, and today give, the last full measure

of their devotion.

Yes, we should vigorously debate and deliberate. That is not only our

right, it is our responsibility. But at this difficult junction, at

this moment when a real battle, a critical battle is being waged in

Baghdad, as we face a brutal enemy who attacked us on 9/11 and wants to

do it again, let us not shout at one another but let us reach out to

one another to find that measure of unity that can look beyond today's

disagreements and secure the Nation's future and the future of all who

will follow us as Americans.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.