Mr. President, I come to the floor this morning to

express my concerns about the growing politicization of the debate

over the war in Iraq. The reason I am concerned is because I think the

revolving door of resolutions we have seen emanating from Washington,

DC, has caused confusion. Now, I would be happy if the confusion were

limited to our enemies. But, unfortunately, I think that confusion

extends to our allies and perhaps even to the troops who are now

serving in that war-torn country.

I do not believe that confusion is called for; rather, clarity is

what we ought to be producing here. But this revolving door of

resolutions being produced by those primarily on the other side of the

aisle has seemed to contribute to our inability to speak with one voice

on the one subject where we ought to be speaking with one voice; that

is, our Nation's security. We ought not to be playing politics of any

kind when talking about the lives of our troops or the resolutions

which might have the unintended consequence of undermining their morale

or causing our friends and allies confusion as to whether we are

willing to stay the course in this battle of wills. This is a battle of

wills.

If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle feel so strongly--as

some of them clearly do--about the conflict in Iraq, then I believe

they have an obligation to cut off funding. We have at least two

Senators who have offered those kinds of resolutions--Senator Dodd and

Senator Feingold. I would put it this way: If my colleagues really

believe all is lost in Iraq and there is no possible way to succeed,

then I think Senators could justly reach the conclusion that the only

moral decision would be to deny funding to send them into harm's way.

But instead what we see is an uncontrollable desire to tinker with our

military operations, deciding in some cases what individual Members of

Congress think should be done on the ground and then on the other hand

what kind of decisions ought to be left to commanders. I suggest to my

colleagues that strategy will lead us nowhere. Congress should not be

involved in micromanaging the day-to-day tactics of military commanders

on the ground. Our Constitution provides for a single Commander in

Chief, not 535 chieftains who can make tactical decisions about

something as sensitive and challenging as war operations in Iraq.

We have heard there are between 5,000 and 6,000 members of al-Qaida

in Iraq, primarily in Anbar Province. It makes no sense to me for us to

pull out our troops until we have defeated those terrorists. Certainly,

I disagree with those who say we ought to pull out our troops before we

are able to stabilize Iraq in a way that it can sustain itself, defend

itself, and govern itself because I think we know what will happen if

Iraq becomes just another failed state in the Middle East, particularly

with those 5,000 to 6,000 members of al-Qaida present in Iraq: It will

become another Afghanistan.

As we all know, when the Soviet Union left Afghanistan, Afghanistan

became a failed state, giving rise to the Taliban and al-Qaida in Iraq,

the likes of Osama bin Laden among them. Of course, it was because they

had a safe haven in Afghanistan that they could then plot and plan and

train and recruit and finance their terrorist operations, and it allows

them the safety and convenience to plan an attack against the United

States, which they did on September 11, 2001.

Of course, we know, because they have told us, that one of al-Qaida's

major goals in Iraq is to increase sectarian violence between the

Sunnis and the Shias. Al-Qaida cannot defeat us on the battlefield; we

know that and they know that. The only way they can prevail is if we

give up, if we pull our combat troops out of Iraq until al-Qaida is no

longer a threat there. We know that Sunni extremists, including al-

Qaida, want to create a civil war that will tear the country apart. The

only way al-Qaida will be successful in doing that is if we allow them

to do so.

We need to let our military do the job in Iraq. We can't pretend to

be able to make the best decisions from here in Washington, DC, about

what kinds of tactics are likely or reasonably calculated to be

successful several thousand miles away.

As recently as Sunday, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services

Committee appeared on a weekend talk show. I would like to read a

little bit of the questions and answers which were produced from that

interaction because I think it demonstrates exactly the kind of

confusion I am talking about that I think ill-serves our troops and

ill-serves our Nation during a time of war.

I think this brief Q-and-A demonstrates the kind of confusion that

occurs when Members of the Senate, notwithstanding their best

intentions, tinker with tactical decisions made with fighting a war

several thousand miles away.

We know the power Congress has under our Constitution, and if, in

fact, there are those, as I said earlier, who believe that all is lost,

then I believe the only appropriate action to take would be for those

people who hold that belief to try to bring a resolution to the floor

that would cut off funding for this ill-fated, in their view, conflict.

But my colleagues can't have it both ways. On the one hand, they can't

say we should leave it to our commanders in the field to determine the

number of troops, and yet when General Petraeus says he needs 21,500

troops to fight the terrorists in Iraq, these same individuals would

tell him: No, you can't have them.

This is a question and answer from the nomination hearing for GEN

David Petraeus.

The kind of confusion I think we have seen emanating from Capitol

Hill is directly related to the revolving door of resolutions we have

seen since the beginning of the year.

First, there was the Biden resolution. Senator Reid, the

distinguished majority leader, said, ``Tomorrow the Senate will proceed

to S. Con. Res. 2, the bipartisan Iraq resolution.'' He said that

on January 31, 2007. Then Senator Reid said later the same day, ``There

will be a bipartisan group of Senators who believe the more appropriate

matter is the Warner resolution.''

So first we had the Biden resolution, then we had the Warner

resolution, and then there was the Levin resolution. Senator Reid said,

on January 31, 2007, ``In my caucus there was near unanimity for the

Levin resolution.'' Then--I mentioned this a moment ago--there are

those such as Senator Feingold who said: ``I oppose the weak Warner-

Levin resolution as currently written because it misunderstands the

situation in Iraq and shortchanges our national security interests.''

He said that on February 1.

Then there was the Reid-Pelosi resolution. This was the one on which

the majority leader said, ``I think it is so much more direct. We

support the troops. We are opposed to the surge. Perfect.'' He was

asked this question: I was asking you why you prefer the House

resolution to move forward. This is the press asking the majority

leader. He said, ``I think it is so much more direct. We support the

troops. We are opposed to the surge. Perfect.'' That is the majority

leader on February 13, 2007.

Then one of the Democratic candidates for President, Senator Chris

Dodd of Connecticut, made this observation, and I happen to think he is

exactly right. He said: ``We have a sense of Senate resolution on

asparagus. They don't mean a whole lot.''

Well, I have heard a lot from my constituents back in Texas who just

wonder what in the world are we doing here in Washington debating a

series of nonbinding resolutions. Senator Dodd has it exactly right. To

show the dignity of these nonbinding resolutions, we even have a Senate

resolution on asparagus. It is demeaning and inappropriate, in my view,

for us to be talking in those kinds of terms when it comes to something

as serious as Iraq.

Then there was the Murtha plan, named after Representative Jack

Murtha, the Democrat from Pennsylvania. This is Representative Murtha's

Plan.

This is his plan.

So this is what the Democrats in the House have had to offer in terms

of resolutions: Let's not vote to cut off funding, but let's tie our

troops in so much redtape and deny them the ability to be successful

with the new plan the President has proposed in Iraq. That was on

February 15.

Representative Jim Cooper, a Democrat from Tennessee, I think tagged

it right, tagged Representative Murtha's plan correctly.

That was what Representative Jim Cooper said on February 23 in the

Washington Post.

He said that on February 23 in the Washington Post.

The latest resolution, the Biden-Levin proposal, was described by

Senator Joe Biden of Delaware, the chairman of the Foreign Relations

Committee in the Senate, another Democrat candidate for President:

``And that resolution can be simply entitled: Revoke the

authorization.''

What he is talking about is revoking the authorization of the use of

military force that Congress passed in 2001. He is talking about, in

2007, going back to 2001 and revoking the original authorization for

use of military force that has resulted in 130,000 American troops

currently in Iraq.

He said that in Des Moines, IA, on February 17.

So Senator Levin's proposal would be to limit the mission, to put

conditions on our troops and on the rules of engagement that would deny

them the ability to be successful, if they were otherwise able to be

successful. He said that on September 19.

Representative Chet Edwards, again of Texas, a Democrat, I think

nailed it

He said that on February 23, 2007.

Then there are other resolutions by other candidates for President.

That was on January 30, 2007. He wanted to cap troops who could be

deployed into Iraq and opposed the President's plan.

Just remember, a moment ago Senator Levin in his resolution said he

wanted to train and equip the Iraqis, and now Senator Clinton says she

wants to defund the Iraqi troops

She said that on FOX News, a special report with Brit Hume on January

18, 2007.

I could go on and on. I know the Senator from Florida is here and

wants to speak on the same topic. But the plethora of resolutions that

seem to be emanating from the other side of the aisle can't do anything

but engender confusion about our aims in Iraq and in the Middle East,

not only for our troops who put themselves in harm's way but for Iraqis

who have allied themselves with us, who have helped us. I would think

that out of the new majority, at least there ought to be a consensus on

what it is we ought to be doing there, that we ought not to be leaving

our troops with any doubt in their minds about our commitment to

support them. We ought not to be leaving any of our friends in Iraq,

who have allied themselves with us by helping us, to doubt, wondering

whether we would pull our troops out precipitously and leave them

exposed to a huge humanitarian crisis and a huge ethnic cleansing by

the violence that would ensue.

My hope is we will give this new plan a chance. As the Iraq Study

Group said, they believe they could support a surge, under appropriate

conditions, on page 73 in that report--a bipartisan report of a group

who have been given great weight in Congress. They have studied the

issue and made recommendations to the President. The President has

consulted broadly with a large number of people, military experts,

people on both sides of the aisle, and has come up with not only a new

commander but a new plan, and we have a new Secretary of Defense.

I fail to understand, and I cannot understand, why it is there are so

many people who are determined to see that plan be unsuccessful by not

providing the troops, by not providing the funding, and by tying our

troops' hands with redtape, in terms of the rules of engagement and the

conditions under which they fight.

Mr. President, I ask our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to

work with us and come up with some plan that can have the support of

the Members of Congress. As I said, it used to be that differences

between political parties stopped at the water's edge, particularly on

a matter so important as our national security. A confusing message is

sent by these revolving-door resolutions that are mutually

contradictory and inconsistent and do nothing to help us win the war

there, to stabilize Iraq, and to bring our troops home as fast as we

can.

I yield the floor.