Mr. President, I recently came to the Senate floor to

express my views relative to the deliberations this body was

undertaking approving and disapproving of the President's way forward

in Iraq. I am strongly in favor of this body debating the U.S. policy

relative to Iraq and believe all my colleagues are as well.

However, as I stated in my earlier speech, it is not appropriate to

allow the majority party to completely dictate the terms of that

debate, as they have tried to do over the last several weeks. That is

why I voted against cloture on the motion to proceed to the Reid

resolution on February 17, along with a vast majority of my Republican

colleagues.

Mr. President, since that time, a new strategy relative to this

debate has come forward. The strategy is essentially an attempt to

deauthorize or restrict U.S. military action in Iraq by revoking or

altering the Iraq war resolution, which passed this body by a vote of

77 to 23 on October 11, 2002. I don't agree with this tactic.

On January 26, the Senate unanimously approved GEN David Petraeus for

his fourth star and to be commander of the multinational forces, Iraq.

No Senator opposed his nomination. General Petraeus supports President

Bush's plan and new strategy in Iraq and has embarked on the mission

for which President Bush chose him and for which this body unanimously

confirmed him. Once again, now we are being asked to disapprove and

deauthorize the very mission we have unanimously confirmed him to

execute. Hopefully, my colleagues can see the irony, as well as the

inconsistency, in the choice they are presenting before this body.

As I have said before, we need to give the new strategy in Iraq a

chance to work. If General Petraeus comes and says it is not working,

then I am prepared to change course. President Bush's current strategy

is not guaranteed to work. However, no approach I have seen or heard

discussed in the past several months has any greater chance of success

than the course we are now taking. Therefore, this strategy deserves a

chance.

In talking with some of my colleagues, on the Republican side as well

as the Democratic side, who recently returned from Iraq, I am very

hopeful that based on the comments they have made, per their visual

inspection of what is going on in Iraq today, based upon their

conversations with General Petraeus, we are seeing some successes, even

though they are minimal at this point. But there is now hope and

encouragement that this strategy is going to work.

If Members of Congress truly don't support our efforts in Iraq and

believe we should withdraw troops, they should vote to cut off funds

for the war, which is the primary authority Congress has in this area.

However, having refused to allow the Senate to vote on protecting

funding for our troops serving in harm's way, the Democrats are now

proposing another symbolic resolution.

This is the fourth resolution that the Senate Democratic leadership

has backed to address the troop increase, and the Democrats still

insist on avoiding the fundamental issue of whether they will cut off

funds for troops serving in Iraq.

This is essentially an attempt to ensure the policy does not succeed.

Logically, the Senate should be giving General Petraeus everything he

needs to succeed, both in terms of financial as well as political

support. But that is not what the majority party is trying to do.

Democrats in the House of Representatives have undertaken a plan that

would tie war funding in a supplemental spending bill to strict new

standards for resetting, equipping, and training troops. This strategy

to choke off resources and the Senate plan to revise the use of force

authorization are attempts to make the war in Iraq unwinnable while

avoiding political responsibility.

There is nothing easy or pretty about war, and this war is no

exception. Not a day passes that I don't consider the human cost of our

attempt to defeat the terrorists and eradicate extremism in Iraq and

replace it with a self-reliant and representative government.

The debate, as we move forward, should focus on how we can most

quickly and effectively achieve the victory that all of us desire. It

is not about political posturing. It is about what Congress can do to

support our young men and women in Iraq and help them accomplish this

critical mission.

Losing the global war on terrorism is not an option. Failure in Iraq

would be devastating to our national security, entangling the Middle

East in a web of chaos that breeds terror and extremism. The Iraq Study

Group and countless expert witnesses have testified that simply leaving

Iraq, without stabilizing the country, would be disastrous.

As the senior Senator from my State, my support of our mission and

our troops includes a responsibility to examine the tactics and

question the steps that we take to reach our goal. I will continue to

do that in a very deliberate way, but I intend to be constructive in my

approach and criticism in order to do everything we can to ensure that

our troops and our mission succeed, rather than doing whatever I can to

make sure they fail.

When this motion to deauthorize or micromanage the war in Iraq comes

to the floor of the Senate, I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

I yield the floor. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.