Mr. President, we heard again this afternoon the same old

story from President Bush about the war in Iraq. He claimed again that

his new escalation strategy is working, that the signs of success are

everywhere, and that victory is imminent. He also, once again, attacked

those of us with the courage to ask the tough questions and tell the

truth about Iraq.

In an effort to shift attention from this administration's failed

policies--and I say that in the plural--the President and his allies

have repeatedly questioned whether I and my fellow Democrats support

our troops. No one wants us to succeed in Iraq more than Democrats. We

have proven that time and time again since this war started more than 4

years ago. We take a backseat to no one in supporting our troops, and

we will never abandon our troops in a time of war.

Given the White House spin machine that has been working overtime in

an effort to defend its failed policies, it is important for me to

repeat what I said yesterday afternoon in this Chamber: The longer we

continue down the President's path, the further we will be from

responsibly ending this war. I said it yesterday, I say it again: The

longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will be

from responsibly ending this war. But there is still a chance to change

course, and we must change course.

Partisans who launched attacks on my comments are the same ones who

continue to support the failed strategy that hurts our troops. Is this

administration supporting the troops when it sends our brave men and

women into battle without the necessary body armor; with vehicles that

are not properly armored? I ask, is the administration supporting the

troops when it fails to provide them the health care they have earned

when they come home?

Our responsibilities end with these troops--never. They don't end

when they leave Iraq. They don't end when they get back home. We have

to continue to help them. That is what we have done.

Is the administration supporting the troops by threatening to delay

their funding unless Congress continues to rubberstamp its failed

policy?

I believe supporting our troops means giving them the funding they

need and a strategy they deserve. It means stopping the partisan

attacks. And it means spending time working together on a bipartisan

basis to develop an effective strategy to successfully end this war.

I wish some of my detractors felt the same. An effective strategy is

exactly what we are offering the President and our troops--no more, no

less. Let's all understand, changing course in Iraq will increase

America's security by bringing this war to a responsible end and

permitting our troops to more effectively fight terror all over the

world. This is precisely the strategy President Bush is vowing to veto.

We heard the same old story from the President today because his

strategy calls for more of the same. It is a failed strategy for our

troops in Iraq. It is a failed strategy for our security at home. It is

dangerous that the President refuses to recognize the reality on the

ground in Iraq.

For those who claim we are on the right path in Iraq, I ask them to

look at this week's newspapers. I am only going to mention now a few

things we find in this week's news.

The White House announced additional National Guard troops would be

sent to Iraq; many, if not most, without the necessary training and

equipment. The White House extended tours in Iraq for all active Army

troops from 12 to 15 months. A week after the Iraqi Parliament was

bombed in the Green Zone, which is the most secure part of Baghdad,

almost 200 Iraqis lost their lives in that city on Wednesday. The

bombings continue today. They will continue tomorrow. We are losing

about four American troops every day this month.

I went to the White House this Wednesday with Speaker Pelosi to meet

with the President and talk about a bipartisan way to craft an

effective strategy in Iraq. We did so because we believe, as do the

American people, that the lives of too many of our soldiers and too

many Iraqis are on the line. The President refused to work with us.

How has the President responded? He has chosen to repeat his

inflexible veto threats and continued to attack those who questioned

his failed policies. Meanwhile, our troops and our national security

are suffering.

It is painfully clear to me, the American people, bipartisan

majorities in both the House and the Senate, military experts all over

this country, and the Iraq Study Group, that the only way to succeed is

to give our troops the strategy their sacrifices deserve. These groups

all know there is no military solution in Iraq.

General Petraeus, the commander on the ground, has said so himself:

20 percent can be won militarily; 80 percent has to be won through our

diplomatic efforts, politics, and economics.

I repeat, the only way to succeed lies through a comprehensive

political, diplomatic, and economic strategy--so says the commander on

the ground there, General Petraeus. Unfortunately, the only one to whom

this is not obvious is our President.

The longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will

be from success. But there is still a chance to change course, and we

must change course. That is what we are offering the President in the

supplemental we passed in both bodies with bipartisan support. We are

offering a reasonable and attainable timeline to reduce combat missions

and refocus our efforts on the real threats to our security. We are

offering action, not just words.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. REID. Will my friend yield?

Mr. REID. I certainly appreciate the Senator being here on the floor

this afternoon. The Senator comes from the fourth most populous State,

but soon to be the third, a State large in area with lots and lots of

people moving there--thousands of people every month. It is a State

that this good man has represented in so many different ways.

We first served together in the House of Representatives. If there

were ever a person who served in Congress who served as a moderate, it

would be the Senator from Florida. He is a person who is always looking

for consensus, always trying to work things out, understanding that the

art of legislation is compromise.

I so appreciate his brief statement today, and I apologize for

interrupting it. I would just go back to more than 6 years ago when

President Bush was elected. I, too, was so enthused about his coming

here. He told me: I want to be a uniter, not a divider. I have been

stunned by what has been going on. It started with Social Security;

Medicare; the recent flap with the Attorney General, the Katrina

situation, wiretaps, stem cells, Terry Schiavo, energy--on and on, with

all these things that we, with rare exception, with a little bit of

patience, with a President willing to work with us, could have done on

a bipartisan basis. On the war, we have to resolve that on a bipartisan

basis. This legislative body is reaching out. That is what we are

doing.

I say to my friend, I appreciate very much not only his statement

today but who he is, who he represents, and how he represents the

people of Florida. We need more Bill Nelsons in this Congress of the

United States.