Thank you, Mr. President.

I wanted to take just a few minutes to kind of review where we are

here in the silence that abounds in this Senate. The question about

what is going on is kind of mystifying for much of the public looking

in and saying: What are they doing wasting time?

There was some talk about the terrible situation we are in in Iraq,

and I spoke as one of those who say we have had enough. We have had

enough there. We have lost over 3,000 people, and the Iraqis have lost

substantial numbers. One would have to be really hardhearted not to be

moved when you look in the paper and you see a child weeping over a

dead mother or a brother or a sister or people lying in the street dead

from brutal attacks from this internal civil war while we are trying to

figure out what we do to protect our people.

What is it that we want to accomplish with the votes that have been

taken here? I think it is fair to say that what we would like on this

side of the aisle, and I am sure there are many colleagues on the other

side who feel as we do but would be out of step politically if they

took the vote we want to take, to approve or disapprove of sending more

troops into that death trap, to say how long we want to stay there.

What do we have to prove by supporting the President's order, the

President's interest in the so-called surge? They try to disguise the

word. The word is ``escalate.'' It is not ``surge.'' ``Surge'' can be

interpreted many ways, but ``escalate'' is very clear: Put more people

there. Put more people in harm's way. Put more people in an abyss from

which there is no way, that anyone has told us, out of the situation.

We get the argument: Oh, you want to cut and run. No. Do you want to

stay and die? Is that what the alternative is? Ask the families who

have children, brothers, fathers, and mothers there. They come in to

see me, people who have someone who is in Iraq, and they are scared to

death about what kind of news they will get some night.

I had a woman in the office one day, with a group of other people,

sobbing so hard that she couldn't talk. Why? Because her son had been

wounded--a light wound but enough to earn him a Purple Heart--and he

was being sent back on hazardous duty. He was willing to do it. His

mother didn't want him to do it. But at what point do we say the pain

is so excruciating that we can't stand it?

It has nothing to do with cut-and-run. I wore a uniform in World War

I. Others here have worn the country's uniform, some in Vietnam, some

in Korea. We have had a lot of experience with wars. But in each case,

if we didn't have an objective, we fared very badly. That was true,

unfortunately, in Vietnam, where we finally had to wrap it up and go

home, leaving 58,000 of our brothers and sisters still there, if not

physically, in sharp memory. And now we see what is happening here.

I bring to our attention the fact that in Iraq, in the month of

January, we lost 83 of our bravest. Thus far in February, we have

already lost 48 members of the American military. And the Iraqis have

suffered deaths. Look at the number of people who have been murdered

there with suicide bombs, roadside bombs, and brutal murders, with

hands tied behind their backs and blindfolded. It goes on and on. If we

could wish it away, if we could see an end to it, I would be more than

willing to leave troops there to kind of monitor the last parts of a

war that is one of the worst America has been in, but what we see is

not only the numbers that are perishing daily, weekly, but the tactics

they are using now with shooting down helicopters. That wasn't

something we saw before.

Suddenly now, in the past couple of weeks, three helicopters have

been taken down by enemy fire. That changes the complexity of things

because helicopters were an integral part of our capacity to fight

back. If we can't do that, does that mean we have to put more people on

the ground, that we have to lose more people? It ought not to be that

way.

Last week, we took a vote here, and it was a vote that would limit

debate. We, the Democrats, led the charge there because we wanted to

get on with the issue of whether we wanted to send more troops than we

have there now. The number, estimated to be at 21,000 in combat, means

that 48,000, roughly, would be the total number because you need the

support groups as well. That vote was disguised as something else,

which is what our friends are doing today--disguising what their intent

is. Their intent is to escape the responsibility they took when they

voted against closing the debate the other day. That is what happened.

They have a lot of discomfort over there. I see my colleague from the

State of Minnesota is here now, and if I am not mistaken, he was one of

those who said: Let's cut the debate and get on with the issue. That is

what his message was that day. And so there is abject discomfort with

the vote that was taken because people at home interpreted that in a

different way. They are not interested so much in our tactical

maneuvering here or the process; they want to know: Do we want to send

more troops into that inferno or do we want to try to figure out a way

to get out of there as quickly as practicable? That is the question.

So they voted the wrong way. And now, Heaven forbid, we had something

we could vote on, and that was voted on by way of closing the debate,

which was developed by Senator Carl Levin of Michigan, chairman now of

the Armed Services Committee, and supported fully by Senator John

Warner, who himself was a veteran and served at the time of World War

II, who agreed with him that we ought to show our displeasure. There

wasn't anything radical in it. We weren't calling the other side names.

We just said we want to stop this escalation. We don't want to put more

troops out there in harm's way. We don't want to see more limbless

veterans. We have almost 800 now, veterans who have lost one limb at

least, and we have 25,000 who have been injured. And there are a lot of

severe injuries that you can't see because they are internal injuries.

They are injuries of the mind. They are injuries of the spirit. There

are a lot of them; 30,000 with PTS, post-traumatic stress, in addition

to those who have the physical, visible wounds we see.

So we want to get on with the vote. Let us have an honest count here

about whether you are for escalation or

against it. Do you want to throw more into the Iraqi war? Do you want

to put more sons and daughters there or do you want them to start

coming home and reuniting them with their families? That is the

question. Instead, it is dressed up here. If we voted to adjourn, it

would be a sign that we are not supporting the troops. Baloney. We

support the troops fully. Each and every one of them over there now is

a hero to us, each and every one, because many of them disagree with

the policy that got them there, the falsification of whether there were

weapons of mass destruction.

I thank our colleague from Minnesota.

What we see is a deliberate attempt to avoid the question: Yes or no,

how do you stand on the escalation of this war? How do you stand on

sending more sons and daughters into that hell on Earth?

It is time to stand up and be counted and not to permit the public,

across this land of ours, to be fooled by debate structures, by

delaying tactics. It is time to stand up and be counted, but we cannot

do that. The other side will not permit us to do it, and we know how to

count votes so we know we do not have enough to do what we would like

to.

But the House has taken the bull by the horns. The House is

considering it, and it is very favorably being considered there--not

yet voted--legislation that says we are against this escalation.

Republicans as well as Democrats there are going to join. What we are

saying here is let us simply vote on that. That is what has been asked

for by our leadership.

I hope we will be able to conclude this debate, find out and let the

American people know where we stand, each one of us. When we raise our

hand, each one of us will be making a declaration: Do we think it is

necessary to put more of our troops out there, to run them through

there at the risk of their limbs, or lives, and disrupt family life,

leaving children without a guiding parent on one side, to let the bills

accumulate, worry about the mortgages? These are people, for the most

part, who were reservists. They have served once, served twice--a year

each--and now a third callup is being talked about because the

President has decided--against the will of many outstanding military

experts, those who have served at the highest rank. They say no, it

will not help. But the President of the United States is very stubborn

on this issue, despite all of the opposition--opposition here,

opposition across this country. The numbers are around 70 percent of

the people do not want us to continue to do this, or send in any more

troops. I hope we can resolve the truth here in short order.

I yield the floor with thanks again to my colleague from Minnesota.