I ask further unanimous consent that the additional time

of the Senator not be charged against the minority. It was our time. I

want to be sure his time is not charged against the minority so we can

finish morning business.

Mr. President, I intend to speak in morning business and

to talk about an issue of great importance in Minnesota, access to

health care in rural communities, but I have to make one comment in

response to my colleague from New Jersey.

Iraq is the most important issue facing America today. There is no

question about it. I want to raise some concerns about the surge in

Baghdad. I understand we are fighting a war against insurgency and

foreign fighters in Anbar Province. If those commanders on the ground

need more, I am going to give it to them. I have great concerns about

the surge. We need to debate this. It is absolutely mind boggling to

watch what is going on with this playing around with rules. The bottom

line is Senators should have the right to debate. Senators should have

the right to offer amendments and we should be voting on whether you

support a surge, we should be voting on whether you support continued

funding, we should be voting on whether there should be benchmarks. We

should do what the Senate does, which is debate, have discussion, and

then vote. What the majority is attempting to do is to forestall that,

offering something that they know is something the Senate does not do,

offering something they know the American public--the public wants us

to debate this and vote on it. So instead they offer a resolution

which, they know, will gather objection, a resolution on which they

will allow no amendments, no discussion about other things other than a

proposal that comes out from them. That is absurd. That is not the

Senate. It is not the greatest deliberative body in the world. We

should do better. The American public deserves better, and I hope our

leaders can come together and figure out a way to structure a debate so

opinions can be laid out and they can be discussed and then we can

vote--not on one thing that a 51-person majority says, but the way the

Senate does it: We put it on the table and vote.

I may disagree with some of my colleagues on this side of the aisle

on some of that, but everyone has a right to lay out their amendments

and their proposal, and we should do so on Iraq.