Mr. President, all across America this past weekend, and

even this morning in schools, cafes, pool halls, I am sure, churches,

synagogues, military bases, and all offices, people are talking about

this war in Iraq. They are talking about President Bush's plan to

escalate the war in Iraq--or ``augment,'' as the amendment of the

Senator from Virginia talks about. But if you look in the dictionary,

``augment'' and ``escalate'' have the same definition. So every place

in America people are talking about Iraq--every place, that is, except

in the Senate. I say that because in press conferences held, in

statements made by the Republican leader, they have stated there will

be no ability to proceed to the debate on this most important issue.

According to my counterpart, the Republican leader, the Republican

Senators are going to say no and, he says, without exception. What does

this mean? That we are not going to be able to move to proceed to this

debate? What is more important than what we are trying to do here

today; that is, move forward on a debate on Iraq? As I said, they are

doing it every other place in America. Why shouldn't we be able to do

it here in the Senate? We learned on Friday--it was continued over the

weekend--that the minority is going to do everything in its power to

block an Iraq vote. Are they so worried that a bipartisan majority of

Senators might voice their opposition to this escalation; so worried

that these Senators are going to prevent any Iraq debate?

Remember, this is a very delicate time in the history of our country.

Not only do we have the Iraq debate to worry about, but we also,

because of the mess, frankly, that was left by the prior majorities in

the House and Senate, have no ability to fund this Government after

February 15. We have to do that. This has to be completed by a week

from this Friday.

I received letters from Republican Senators. They are going to

filibuster the continuing resolution, which

means I have to move forward on this to keep the Government from

shutting down. Our inability to go forward on the Iraq debate means we

may not have the Iraq debate. Remember, we have lost, already, several

days. We should be debating this right here today rather than having to

vote at 4:30 on whether we can proceed on it.

What is the excuse--and I say excuse--that they are not going to let

the American people hear the Senate debate the escalation of the war in

Iraq? This claim--and I might say, it is a feeble claim--that they

haven't been guaranteed a vote on amendments is not credible. It is

simply not true. They have rejected, through their leader--they, the

Republicans--three compromises that would have permitted the Senate to

vote on the President's plan. I have done this privately. I have done

it publicly.

I offered to schedule an up-or-down vote on McCain--that is a

resolution supporting the President's plan--and on the Warner-Levin

resolution in opposition. That is votes up or down on these two

amendments. This offer was rejected.

We then offered the Republican leadership up-or-down votes on those

two resolutions I just talked about and they had another one. The

Republican leader had another one. I read it. It is the Gregg

amendment. So we said let's go ahead and vote on that. I was turned

down there also.

I don't know what more we can do. I even went one step further and

said we will hold supermajority votes, 60 votes, on Warner and on

McCain, two separate votes, 60 each. What more could we do? These were

rejected. I have said this publicly, but I said it privately--and there

were all kinds of witnesses to my conversation with the Republican

leader--the Republican leader obviously can't take ``yes'' for an

answer. They have been given all they asked. It is clear their actions

are not driven by getting votes on Republican proposals, they are not

being driven by getting votes on Republican proposals; they are driven

by a desire to provide political cover.

The majority can't rubberstamp the President's policies on Iraq

anymore so they decided to stamp out debate and let the actions in Iraq

proceed unchecked. America deserves more than a filibuster on the

President's flawed plan to add 48,000 troops to Iraq. It is not 21,000.

The war in Iraq has taken a great toll on our country. Well more than

3,000 American soldiers have been killed, 24,000 or 25,000 of them

wounded, a third of them missing eyes--head injuries. We have 2,000 who

are missing limbs.

The war has strained our military. I have been told by leaders at the

Pentagon that we do not have a single Army unit that is nondeployed

that is battle ready.

We do not have a single, nondeployed Army unit that is

ready to go to war. We have depleted our Treasury over $400 billion--

some say $500 billion.

Look at this. The Congressional Budget Office is a nonpartisan entity

set up by this Congress. According to the Congressional Budget Office,

a surge of 21,500 combat troops really means up to 48,000 more troops

when support personnel are counted. And, remember, the 3,180 American

soldiers who were killed were not all combat troops. They were

truckdrivers, they were working in commissaries, they were doing all

kinds of things to support the combat troops.

So we are saying it is not 21,500, it is 48,000, and it is going to

cost, this little surge, an additional $27 billion. If the President

wants to escalate the conflict and send, according to CBO, 48,000 more

troops, given these costs alone--that is $27 billion in addition--it is

important the Senators have an opportunity to vote up or down on

escalation.

But it is even more important because there is widespread opposition

in Congress and the country to the President's plan. Those we trust the

most do not believe escalation is the right way forward. America's

generals don't support this. What does General Casey say? When he was

in Iraq he said, I don't think this is going to work. General Abizaid

said the same thing. Many others have told us the same thing.

More troops will not bring stability to Iraq. The Iraq Study Group

sent this project in another direction. They made very different

recommendations. America's generals--of course, they do not support

this. The American people do not support the escalation. Look at any

public opinion poll--Democrats, Republicans, Independents. The

President has heard from the Prime Minister of Iraq, al-Maliki, that he

doesn't want more troops in Baghdad; he wants American troops to leave

Baghdad. He told the President that to his face. This is the message

President Bush has heard from the generals, the people, the Iraq Study

Group, even the Iraq Prime Minister. Now the President should hear from

Congress. But is he going to? Perhaps not. The President must hear from

Congress that he stands alone. A loud bipartisan message from this body

will give him another opportunity to listen and to change course to a

plan that gives our troops the best chance for success and gives the

country of Iraq the best chance for stability.

Is there anyone who does not think this is an important debate? Is

there anyone who believes the Senate should remain silent on the most

pressing issue facing the country today? Unfortunately, the answer is

yes. According to the Republican leader, all Republican Senators will

vote not to proceed.

We are running out of time to find a new way forward in Iraq. That is

certainly clear. Americans and our troops have waited 4 years for the

Senate to get off the sidelines on this issue. They shouldn't have to

wait longer for a new direction in Iraq because the minority wants to

protect their politics at home.

We have seen politics in this war before. Politics gave us ``Mission

Accomplished.'' Remember that? On the aircraft carrier, the President

dressed in a flight suit said: The mission is accomplished; we have won

in Iraq. Politics gave us the Vice President who said the insurgency

was in its last throes, and the President saying: There are insurgents?

Bring them on. Politics gave us a Vice President who promised America

we would be greeted as liberators. So we have had enough of this

politics for 4 years into this war--4 years.

What we need is a strategy that will succeed in Iraq, a strategy that

is not an escalation. Last week, America's intelligence communities

provided their latest estimates of conditions on the ground in Iraq.

The picture they painted was bleak and was backed by events this past

week in Iraq. Every day, with rare exception, this is what we see out

of Iraq: More than 200 people killed--more than 200 people. Hundreds

and hundreds injured. It was a 2,000-pound bomb in a marketplace. The

Iraqi Interior Ministry, which has been very conservative, said last

week that at least 1,000 were killed in Iraq. Two million, it was

reported over the weekend, have left Iraq--2 million Iraqis have left

Iraq.

We don't need the unclassified assessment of our intelligence

community to know things aren't going well in Iraq--and that is an

understatement--that the present strategy has failed and there are only

nonmilitary solutions to address Iraq's problems. That is why the

military surge makes no sense.

Again, the National Intelligence Estimate came out last week. It was

months overdue, but it did come out. Here are some of the things it

talked about.

This is not Harry Reid. These are the finest, the people who are

doing their very best to make America safe

I have been saying, and the American people have been saying, for

months this is a civil war. It is a civil war, but it is more than a

civil war.

In effect, they are saying the President is now sending battle

carrier groups off the waters of Iran because

he is trying to blame them for everything that is going on in Iraq.

That is not credible.

Am I saying Iran is the good guy on the block? Of course not. But

let's not say they are the cause of all the trouble in Iraq because

they are not.

Mr. President, we need to work to come to a political solution for

the problems in Iraq.

Surging U.S. military forces is not a development that is going to

help in Iraq. That is because there is no military solution. Military

escalation would not end this conflict that is more complex than a

civil war. Military escalation would not make it easy for Iraqi leaders

to achieve political reconciliation. Military escalation would not

bring an end to Iraq's internal sectarian struggle.

Mr. President, as I said when I started, all over America today

people are talking about what is going on in Iraq--every place you want

to talk about, whether it is the water cooler at the office or truck

drivers on their CBs talking back and forth to each other. It is in

schools all over America, from elementary to college, talking about

what is going on in Iraq. But in the Senate, are we going to have a

debate on it? We have been told ``no.''

The problems in Iraq are long term. Yet military escalation is a

strategy that is shortsighted. This is the message President Bush has

heard from the generals, the people, the Iraqi Prime Minister, the Iraq

Study Group, and now he must hear from Congress. I hope this afternoon

my Republican colleagues will do what is right and allow this important

debate to go forward.

Fairness. You start throwing the 60-vote number around when

you have something to hide or you want to stall, and it appears that is

the case here. We have offered the Republicans an up-or-down vote on

Warner, an up-or-down vote on McCain, and an up-or-down vote on the

matter relating to Senator Gregg. How much fairer could you be on that?

We have heard in this body from the Republicans for years now: Up-or-

down vote, up-or-down vote. We want an up-or-down vote.

That is what we want. Why should there be an arbitrary ruling by the

minority that this take 60 votes as to how people feel about the Warner

amendment or the McCain amendment?

Sure.

Mr. President, nearly everything we do in this body--and I

will be happy to respond to the distinguished Republican leader--nearly

everything we do in this body is determined by unanimous consent. We

have matters that come before this body--and that is how we get here,

is with unanimous consent. I can't imagine why there would be anyone

who would require 60 votes unless they didn't want us to go forward--

unless they didn't want us to go forward. That obviously is the message

we are giving around the country. Look at any newspaper: ``GOP

Threatens to Block Vote on Resolution.'' That, Mr. President, is USA

Today. That is only one newspaper. They are all over America, the same

thing.

This is an effort to stop. For every day we are not able to debate

the Iraq resolution means one less day, and maybe we would not be able

to get to it because of the continuing resolution. As I said earlier,

we have been told by letters I received from Republicans that they are

going to filibuster the continuing resolution. Today, starting today

whenever we came in--and we came in late because we knew we had this

procedural vote--we should have been debating Warner and McCain, but we

are not. And now, if cloture is invoked, there is 30 hours after that

before we can get to debating this and by then, frankly, it is too

late. We will not be able to do it because of the continuing

resolution.

Of course.

Could ask for 60 votes. I say to my friend, hypothetically

that is true, but that is the way it is with many things in this body.

But that person would have to come forward, identify themselves, and

stand up and say:

I do not want the debate on Iraq to go forward. This is a little

difficult to do with the situation where, as I said before, everybody

in America wants this debate to go forward. So let's hear somebody on

the other side stand up, akin to a Senator who believes in something,

and say: I don't want this debate to go forward.

Mr. President, keep in mind what I offered the minority:

up-or-down votes on Warner and McCain; up-or-down vote on Judd Gregg. I

also offered a 60-vote on Warner and a 60-vote on McCain. That was also

turned down.

This thing about 60 votes is exaggerated. I have been in the Senate

25 years. I have been involved in two filibusters, and that is two more

than most anyone in the Senate has been involved in. Filibusters are

just talk. Rarely are filibusters ever necessary or do they occur.

Therefore, this ``everything is 60 votes'' is simply not valid.

They want a fair process? Up-or-down vote on McCain, up-or-down vote

on Warner, up-or-down vote on Judd Gregg. Okay, don't want that? I tell

you what, this has been stated publicly and privately long before

today: We will give you a 60-vote on Warner, we will give you a 60-vote

on McCain. Nope. Turned down.

Where does this fairness come in? Is fairness in the eye of the

beholder? They have to get everything they want? I cannot imagine how

we could be more fair. The American public would see a debate on

Warner, see a debate on McCain. One is for the surge, one is against

the surge. Why not have that debate? There will be lots of other times

to debate other issues dealing with Iraq. We have the September 11

recommendation coming up; we have the supplemental coming up. Iraq is

not going to leave the Senate. But it will leave this Senate if we are

not allowed to proceed in this manner because--again I say that is

because of bad housekeeping and the Republicans just simply leaving

town after they lost the majority--we have to pass a continuing

resolution. We have to. We have no alternative. We have to start on

that by Wednesday.

My offer has always been an up-or-down vote on McCain, on

Warner, on Judd Gregg, and the Democratic alternative which basically

says we are against the surge. It has always been the same. And the 60-

vote would be on McCain and on Warner.

I would also say I appreciate my friend talking about the ethics in

lobbying reform and the debate we had on minimum wage. However, I don't

want to start a battle that is already over. But one reason we were

able to get those two bills passed--we thought stopping debate on these

was not the right thing to do. We spoke out loudly, and the American

people said: Let's get on with those two issues. They held it up for a

little while but not for very long.

Mr. President, I have offered 60 votes on McCain and

Warner.