I thank my friend from Illinois. Mr. President, this

whole discussion can best be described as a bump in the road. The

majority leader and I had a number of discussions last week about how

to proceed with the Iraq debate. There is no reluctance on this side of

the aisle to have that debate. In fact, we had a number of different

Republicans who had different approaches to offer in anticipation of

the Iraq debate this week. We hear there are different approaches on

the Democratic side as well.

In an effort to reach a unanimous consent agreement, we pared down

our requests to two resolutions, one by Senator McCain and Senator

Lieberman that basically embodied benchmarks for the Iraqi Government

and one by Senator Gregg, a very important resolution that should be

voted on in the Senate that deals with the issue of whether the Senate

believes we should cut off funds for the troops. This vote this

afternoon should not be misunderstood. This is a fairness vote. This

vote this afternoon is a vote to insist that the minority have a fair

process in going forward to this very important debate. I think I am

safe to say every single Republican shares the view it is not

requesting too much of the majority to have a fair process. We could

have asked for many more than two resolutions. There were several other

Members of the Senate on this side of the aisle who had what they

thought were good ideas that should have been put in the queue.

With regard to what the vote should be, this is the Senate. With the

exception of the budget resolution, I can't think of anything in the

Senate we have dealt with in my memory, except some kind of consent on

a noncontroversial matter, that didn't require a 60-vote threshold.

That is routine in the Senate. That is not extraordinary; that is

ordinary. So what could be done and should be done--and I hope will be

done sometime today--is the majority leader and myself will sit down

and come up with a reasonable list of resolutions, all of them, as

everything else in the Senate, subject to a 60-vote threshold. In fact,

our good friends on the other side of the aisle in the previous

Congress went to great lengths to establish that there even ought to be

a 60-vote threshold for judges, something that had not been the norm in

the Senate. So it looks to me like where we are today is that

everything in the Senate requires 60 votes. Why would we not have a 60-

vote threshold for the most important issue in the country right now:

The Iraq war? So, of course, we think it should be dealt with in the

same way that other issues are dealt with in the Senate.

So make no mistake about it. This vote at 5 o'clock doesn't have

anything whatsoever to do with scuttling the Iraq debate. We welcome

the debate. We are happy to have it. But the minority will insist on

fair treatment, and our definition of fair has been pared down to two

resolutions. And all of the resolutions, as everything else we consider

in the Senate, would be subject to a 60-vote threshold.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Would the majority leader yield for a question?

Isn't it true that any one Member of the Senate, just

one Member of the Senate could insist that there be a 60-vote threshold

on this issue?

Would the majority leader yield for a question?

Let me repeat my question. Isn't it true, I say to my

good friend, the majority leader, that any one Member of the Senate

could ensure that a matter has to receive 60 votes?

Mr. President, let me say that there are many Members

on my side who would argue we should not be having this debate this

week at all. I hope none of those watching this on C-SPAN or any people

in the gallery are confused. A 60-vote threshold is routine in the

Senate. It is the ordinary, not the extraordinary. There was really

only one exception to that, and that was the consideration of judicial

nominees. My good friends on the other side of the aisle spent an

enormous amount of time in the last couple of years trying to establish

a 60-vote threshold for that as well.

There is nothing the minority is asking for that is in any way

extraordinary, nothing extraordinary about it at all. It is really

quite ordinary. We are prepared to have a debate on Iraq this week. We

look forward to having a debate on Iraq this week. What should happen

is the distinguished majority leader and myself should agree, by

consent, to a reasonable number of resolutions. As I have indicated,

some of the Republican Senators have given up their opportunity to

offer proposals in deference to my request that we narrow down the

number of resolutions to a reasonable number for consideration this

week.

I hope that one of two things would happen: Either we vitiate the

vote this afternoon because it is completely unnecessary or we will

defeat cloture and the majority leader and I, hopefully, will be able

to sit down and reach agreement for a fair consideration of alternate

proposals that could have been reached last Friday and I had hoped

would have been reached last Friday.

Mr. President, first, with regard to the 60-vote

threshold, the majority leader and I both praised the bipartisan

cooperation we had in the Senate on both the ethics bill and the

minimum wage bill, both of which had a 60-vote requirement. That

demonstrates how extraordinary 60-vote requirements are. These were two

bills which were widely praised by both the majority leader and myself

as examples of bipartisan cooperation.

I heard the majority leader say up-or-down votes on McCain and on

Warner. If he would throw in the Gregg amendment for an up-or-down

vote--I am sorry, what was his offer?

A further illustration of how ordinary it is to get 60

votes around here, there have been 9 cloture motions filed in this

Congress alone, and we are now finally starting the second month. It is

really not in dispute that a 60-vote threshold is quite common around

here. It is ordinary rather than extraordinary.

I yield the floor.

I understand he has offered 60 votes on McCain and

Warner. The Gregg amendment is also important and would have to be

included in any such negotiation which, hopefully, we will get back to

having later today.