Mr. President, I rise this evening being greatly

disturbed by what happened on the floor of the Senate, after a

tremendous amount of good-faith effort and very hard work by our

colleagues on both sides of the aisle, bringing together a resolution

to offer to this body for a debate, for a full debate on the question

of escalating the war in Iraq. What we have seen from the minority is a

filibuster that has stopped us from even proceeding--from even

proceeding to be able to take up the resolution.

Our majority leader offered to take up other resolutions, some

contradicting the one that we wished to have brought forward, to have

equally debated resolutions, the same amount of time, the same amount

of votes that are needed in order to be able to bring forward the

resolutions and possibly pass them.

Every effort by the majority leader was turned down. Every time he

brought up a possible solution to be able to bring forward these

resolutions and have a full debate, which the American people are

demanding that we do, he was told ``no.'' No, no, no. So we are now in

a situation where the minority has voted down the ability for us to

even go to a resolution or multiple resolutions dealing with the issue

of Iraq, which we are all so deeply concerned about.

Right now it is after midnight in Baghdad, and we have over 130,000

American troops who are settled in for another long night half a world

away from home. They are living, working, fighting in the most

difficult conditions anyone can imagine. They are patrolling crowded

streets. They are standing guard on lonely posts. They are reaching out

to Iraqi citizens and putting themselves constantly in harm's way to

protect their fellow soldiers. They are there because their Government

called them. They come from every corner of this great Nation. They

represent every color, creed, religion, and political voice in this

country.

I have been to Iraq--many of us have--and I have talked to our men

and women in the field and they are the best this country has to offer.

For our entire history, they have answered when called. They have gone

where we sent them. They have fought when we have asked them to do so.

They have dedicated their lives to preparing for wars they did not

want, and when asked, they have executed their training with pride,

bravery, and an unwavering spirit.

We are blessed this evening to sleep under the blanket of freedom

they provide. And no one--no one in this Chamber--is questioning the

job they are doing. We are all patriots in this debate--all of us--with

differing views, strongly held views about the best way to move

forward. We are all patriots.

I have listened intently over the past weeks, and I have heard

colleagues and representatives of the administration state time and

again that those of us questioning the President are somehow

undermining the morale of our troops. I find that insulting, not only

to me and to my colleagues who care deeply about this and who have

worked together in a bipartisan way to bring forward this resolution

but to our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, and marines. Open and

honest debate about the execution of this war is not only what our

armed services expect, it is what they deserve. Our citizen soldiers

demand our best, and our best is not idle silence. Our best is not a

filibuster that stops a resolution from even coming to the floor so

that we can have an open, honest debate about it. Our citizen soldiers

are on the frontlines. In this Chamber, we use words, but those words

have real-world consequences, and no one lives those consequences more

than our troops on the ground. Debate in a democracy does not undermine

the morale or the will of our armed services. The lack of a clear,

measurable, and achievable mission does undermine what they are doing.

That is what we are all wanting to see happen. That is what we want to

see developed for them.

They need to know that their leaders have based their orders on

reason, not on wishful thinking and on a misguided adherence to a

failed strategy. They need to know that their leaders have sensibly

considered all of the options available and that those considerations

are grounded in fact, not in rhetoric or posturing.

On October 11, 2002, 23 of us in the Senate cast a lonely vote

against this White House effort to go to war because the evidence was

not clear enough--it just wasn't there--to warrant going to war. I cast

that vote because I believed that the pretense for war was based not in

definable evidence but on predetermined conclusions. War is a tool of

last resort, a decision that should be made with great trepidation when

our country is at risk and other options have been exhausted.

From day one, the reasoning for this war has been unclear and

inconsistent, from the initial lack of preparedness for securing

Baghdad to the most recent call for escalation. We have seen a strategy

based on the best-case scenario calculations of politicians, not on the

wholly realistic conclusions of career military officers. Mistakes have

been made at every turn, and 4 years and over 3,000 American lives

later and hundreds of thousands of lost lives and injuries of Iraqis,

we are still paying the price.

Some have insisted this resolution is a ploy to embarrass the

President. This is clearly not our goal. This is not a discussion about

politics. It is a debate about policy. Any soldier will tell you there

are no politics in a foxhole. The American people, Republicans and

Democrats, are asking us to look long and hard at what we are doing in

Iraq. We were not elected to stand silently by while our fellow

citizens demand answers.

We can't even have a full debate because of the vote that happened.

The American people are asking us not only to debate but to come to the

right answers, the responsible answers for the direction and strategy

in Iraq. Our soldiers deserve that, and we have in front of us a

resolution that we couldn't even get enough votes to bring up to

discuss, to debate it fully and have a vote. I believe the simple fact

is very clear that escalation is not the answer, and I want the

opportunity to vote on that, to say that on behalf of the people of

Michigan. Putting more Americans in harm's way will not bring our men

and women home any sooner. Why would we go further down the path that

has led us to this point? Why would we repeat our previous mistakes and

call it a new strategy?

A free and stable Iraq can only be secured by the Iraqis. They must

embrace responsibility for their collective future and decide that

living and dying at the hands of sectarian violence is not the future

they want for their children and their grandchildren. We must support

their efforts--and I do--but we cannot substitute American troops for

Iraqi resolve. With the freedom of self-determination comes the

responsibility of collective security.

We must continue to train our friends in Iraq. We must equip them and

provide sensible military support based on the advice of our generals

and military experts. We must lead them by example, by embracing the

realities of our own democratic process as we attempt to collectively

solve the challenges in the war in Iraq. How can we be talking to them

about the democratic process when that process is stopped right here in

the Senate in the ability to openly debate and vote on the resolution?

I stand in support of the Warner-Levin resolution and to say that

escalation is a grave mistake. I am certain when judged by our fellow

Americans, the votes that many Members will cast, if we have the

opportunity to do so, to say ``enough is enough'' to this White House

will be greeted with sober support.

With heaviness in my heart, I am also sadly confident that when

judged by history, those who have questioned the reasoning and the

execution of this war will have our concerns justified.

We can't change how we got here. We can't change the fact we are in

Iraq. That chapter of history is written, set in stone, and paid for

with the lives of Americans and Iraqis, and the lives of many other

individuals around the world. However, we can learn from the path we

have walked. We have the ability to reassess and to change course, to

get it right, to put forward our collective best wisdom from everyone

who has been involved. On behalf of our soldiers, they deserve that.

They deserve a full debate in the Senate, to be able to state our

positions on policy, on policy that right now at this moment they are

carrying out in Iraq. They deserve the very best debate and very best

decisions.

That is what this is about. That is what we were hoping to get

tonight, the opportunity to go forward, to work together in a

bipartisan way to put forward a statement that says we believe there is

a better way, a better strategy than what the President has begun to

execute.

I hope we will have an opportunity to vote on this resolution. I

welcome other resolutions that colleagues have put forward in good

faith. I may not agree with them--and that is all right; that is how

the process works--but they deserve debate just as our resolutions

deserve debate.

In Iraq, we are talking about their setting up a democracy, the

ability to fully debate and participate in their government. We need to

show by example that we are not afraid of debate, of involvement, we

are not afraid to stand and say what we think and put our own vote and

opinions on the line on something so critical to the future of our

country, most particularly to our men and women in the armed services

and their families, and, frankly, to the world.

We need the opportunity to vote. We need the opportunity to debate.

The American people are calling on the Senate to do nothing less.

Tonight was not an example of our listening.