Mr. President, I noted with some interest the headline in

today's Washington Post. It says ``GOP Stalls Debate on Troop

Increase.'' I must say, in light of the remarks of the Senator from

Maryland, obviously nobody has stalled the debate on troop increase or

anything else to do with the conflict in Iraq. In fact, I think that is

a positive thing because there isn't

anything more important, in my view, than debating this important issue

and, as the Senator from Maryland said, supporting our troops.

I do have profound disagreement, though, that these nonbinding

resolutions which have been offered do anything other than encourage

our enemy and undermine our troop morale.

I wonder why it is that so many are insistent that we proceed forward

on nonbinding resolutions when, in fact, we know what power the

Congress has when it comes to war. It is not to supplant the Commander

in Chief, it is not to have 535 micromanagers, but it is the power of

the purse. Yet it is the very amendment that Senator Gregg, the Senator

from New Hampshire, has offered that the majority leader has denied an

opportunity to debate and on which to have an up-or-down vote.

That is what the vote yesterday was about. It is not to cut off debate;

it is to make sure the debate continues and that the varied positions

espoused by Members of the Senate are not only fully debated but that

there is an opportunity to vote on those positions.

At least two Members of the majority--Senator Dodd and Senator

Feingold--have made it clear that they believe the power of the purse

should be exercised to cut off funding to support this new plan

forward. While I disagree with them, I do respect the fact that they

actually intend to vote for something that would make a difference in

the outcome as opposed to the nonbinding resolutions which have been

offered by Senator Levin and others.

I do not understand why it is the critics--the President's critics

and the critics of what is happening in Iraq--why they will not take

yes for an answer. Yes, as the Senator from Maryland said, on November

7, obviously, Iraq was on the minds of the American people. It is one

of the reasons why, frankly, the then majority is no longer the

majority.

There were critics on the other side of the aisle who said the

Secretary of Defense needed to be replaced. Now we have confirmed a new

Secretary of Defense, Secretary Robert Gates.

There are those who said: What we are doing in Iraq is not working,

so we need a new commander. And, indeed, we have confirmed,

unanimously, a new commander of Coalition Forces in Iraq.

There are those who said: We need a new plan in Iraq. And lo and

behold, the President announced a new plan after lengthy consultation.

I think there is a fair amount of revisionist history or selective

memory going on. For example, there are some who said the President did

not consider, in coming up with this new plan, the provisions of the

Iraq Study Group. Of course, this is a bipartisan group that made 79

different recommendations. But I would challenge the critics who say

the President ignored the Iraq Study Group report to look at page 73 of

that report, where they say, unanimously--a bipartisan group--they

could support a temporary surge of troops to secure Baghdad if it was

necessary.

Indeed, if you look at this new way forward, that is precisely what

it is, a temporary surge, supporting Iraqi troops to provide an

opportunity not only to clear but to hold Baghdad and then to build and

begin the political reconciliation process that is necessary for

stabilization.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are saying we do not

want to debate, when the truth is they are denying us a right to vote

on some of the key resolutions that define the nature of the debate in

this Congress.

We want a debate. We want a debate, but we want it to be a fair

debate. And we want it to be representative. We want to expand and

extend the debate so we can fully examine and discuss what is at stake

in this central front in the global war on terror. We want a full and

comprehensive debate and an opportunity to vote. Do they?

If our friends on the other side of the aisle are serious when they

say they do not want to block funding for our troops, then why are they

dodging an amendment offered by Senator Gregg that would allow them a

vote on that important issue?

Now, I disagree that we should ever cut off funds to support our

troops while they are in a time of war. But I think if you feel what is

happening in Iraq cannot be justified, if you feel we have already lost

and we are merely sending more troops into harm's way, with no chance

of accomplishing the mission, then I would say the only real vote that

matters would be one that would cut off the funds to allow that to

happen. That would be the moral decision to make. I simply disagree

with the judgment. I do not believe all is lost. I do believe this new

plan, this new commander, this new Secretary of Defense have a

reasonable chance of success.

Now, we all agree the consequences of failure in Iraq are not simply

something we can walk away from. The Iraq Study Group said that failure

in Iraq could result in a regional conflict, most likely ethnic

cleansing, where the sectarian violence would spiral out of control,

perhaps bringing in other countries to defend the various sectarian

parties to that conflict.

We know from sad experience what happened in Afghanistan after the

Soviet Union was defeated by the Afghan rebels, where the Taliban and

al-Qaida set up business in Afghanistan and used that as a place to

train and recruit and then to launch terrorist attacks against the

United States, such as what occurred on September 11, 2001.

Where is the plan of the critics of this new way forward in Iraq?

What is their plan to avoid a failed state in Iraq? Where is their plan

to avoid the kind of regional conflict and the humanitarian crisis that

will most likely occur if, in fact, we do not try to support this new

plan forward and bring stability to Iraq long enough to where the

Iraqis--which is their responsibility--can engage in the reconciliation

process and the political process necessary to stabilize that country,

which is in their best interest, which is in our best interest? Because

we know if things spiral out of control in Iraq, if we decide to

precipitously leave Iraq and it becomes a failed state or becomes a

killing field for ethnic cleansing, we will most likely have to return

at even greater loss of blood and treasure.

So I would ask the new majority, since the Senator from Maryland

mentioned the election of November 7, what is your plan? To criticize

may be OK if you are in the minority. But if you are the majority,

surely you have a responsibility to offer a constructive alternative.

It is not constructive to merely criticize the new plan that is going

to be executed by the new commander, unanimously confirmed by this

Congress, and a new Secretary of Defense.

I must say, with all due respect, it is not supporting our troops to

send them into harm's way if, in fact, our colleagues believe all is

lost and they cannot succeed. I do not believe that. But if, in fact,

they truly do believe that, then they should stand up and be willing to

vote on the only resolution that would have an outcome on that

determination. That is the Gregg amendment.

It is because we have been denied an opportunity to vote on that only

amendment that counts that this debate continues. It was not cut off

yesterday; merely a fair process was secured for those of us who think

that all views ought to be represented and we ought to have more than

one vote rather than be railroaded in this process.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.