Mr. President, last evening the Republicans said no to an honest

debate about what is best for our troops in Iraq, our national

security, and for the American people. Our men and women in uniform

have done everything that we have asked them to do. They have served

with dignity, honor, and valor. They have served in Iraq longer than

American forces fought in World War II. It has been said by Republicans

and Democrats: This doesn't cry for a military solution, it cries for a

political solution and resolution. Still we have a President who is

relying on sending an additional 20,000 to 38,000 troops more to what

is effectively a civil war.

The cost in blood and treasure has been staggering. More than 3,000

Americans have been killed so far, including

64 from Massachusetts; more than 23,000 have been wounded. In my home

community, SGT Alexander Fuller of Centerville, MA, was buried last

week; Keith Callahan of Woburn, MA--Woburn, MA, that had a higher

percentage of soldiers killed in Vietnam than any other community in

our State. High school class after high school class after high school

class joined the U.S. Marines. They were in the thick of the fighting

with devastating losses. Keith Callahan, in his fourth trip to Iraq,

was killed just 10 days ago. The services in that community took place

last week.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed, and millions have

fled their homes. We have spent hundreds of billions of dollars on the

war already. Today the President is asking for hundreds of billions of

dollars more. President Bush insists on his policy of escalation, while

most of us in Congress are increasingly convinced that de-escalation is

the only realistic strategy. The American people do not support further

escalation of this war. The legislation on which we seek an honest

debate is intended to make a record of who is on the side of the

American people and opposes sending tens of thousands more American

troops into this civil war.

Despite the clear result of the November election, our Republican

colleagues are not prepared to face the truth on Iraq. They are

determined to avoid a debate on the most important national security

issue of our time. They are willing to allow tens of thousands of more

young men and women to be dropped in the cauldron of a civil war.

The cost in precious American lives is reason enough to end this

mistaken and misguided war, but the cost at home came into full view

yesterday as we received the President's budget. This President's

budget devotes more than $200 billion to the war in Iraq. Where does

the money come from? It comes from the Children's Health Insurance

Program, as the President's budget underfunds the CHIP program by $8

billion. That program provides health care to low-income children. It

has had bipartisan support in the Senate and the House of

Representatives. It has made an extraordinary difference to the quality

of health of millions of children. There are millions of children who

are qualified for this program. But because the Federal Government

doesn't provide the help to the States, those children are not going to

get covered.

Make no mistake about it. We are taking those resources that ought to

be devoted to the CHIP program and sending them to Iraq. It comes from

our children's education, the No Child Left Behind Act, because this

budget underfunds the No Child Left Behind reforms by almost $15

billion. What are we saying? We are not going to get the well-trained

teachers that this legislation requires. We are not going to have the

adequacy of supplementary services to help those children in high

school. We are not going to move toward smaller class sizes. We are not

going to have an effective program to bring in parents. We are not

going to have the examination of these children to find out what they

need in terms of help in their classes. No, because we are shipping

billions of dollars to Iraq.

Twenty-three thousand children are in the streets of Philadelphia

today, having dropped out of school; 22,000 children have dropped out

of school in Cleveland, OH. It is happening all over the country. And

what are we doing? Sending away billions and billions of dollars that

ought to be there for prevention programs to stop those children from

dropping out of school, to help those children get back into school so

they will have useful and productive lives. They are the ones who are

paying for these wars.

As to seniors, our disabled citizens, the President cut $66 billion

from the Medicaid Program which is a lifeline to millions of retirees

and disabled children. I was there when President Johnson said: You

work hard, you pay into the Medicare Program, pay into those programs,

and we guarantee you that you are going to have the health care you

need for the rest of your life. That is a commitment that we made. Now

we are skimping on it. We didn't provide at that time a prescription

drug program. We provided one eventually that served more for the drug

industry and the HMOs than it did for the senior citizens. We are

cutting back on health care for our seniors and the disabled.

It comes from our workers who are looking for good jobs to support

their families because the President's budget slashes $1 billion from

programs that train Americans for jobs for the future. How many

speeches will we hear about competitiveness and the problems we are

facing in terms of the world economy, how we are going to have to

redouble our efforts in order to be competitive, to have the new

industries that will provide new jobs and new benefits and new

opportunities for our citizens. Every Member of this body will be

making that speech someplace in their State next week. We know that.

What are we doing?

In my State of Massachusetts, we have 275,000 people who are

unemployed, and we have 78,000 job vacancies. The only thing that is

lacking is training. We have 24 applications for every opening for

training. People want the training to get the skills to participate and

take care of their families. What does this President do? He cuts that

program. That is part of the cost.

People are asking back home--down in New Bedford and Fall River and

Lowell and Lawrence and Holyoke and Springfield--who is going to stand

up for us? It is not only the loss of their sons and daughters from

those communities, but they see that it is gutting the lifelines to

their communities, the children and the elderly, those who are the most

vulnerable in our society. They are paying the price. Read the

President's budget. Make no mistake about it. Who is paying the price?

They are paying the price, the neediest people in our society.

Then it comes from the poor who are struggling against the bitter

cold. It cuts 17 percent of the funding for the Low Income Energy

Assistance Program that helps low-income families heat their homes.

Maybe it is warm in certain parts of this country, but it is cold as

can be in many others. There are a lot of needy people in those cold

areas where there is a completely inadequate fuel assistance program

now. This administration has cut back on that program year after year

after year, and this year is no different, a 17-percent reduction.

Most of the elderly people, the needy people in my State, need to

have their oil tanks, if they are using home heating oil, filled three

times a year. This won't even let them get one tank of fuel assistance

in their homes over the year. The poor are paying a fearsome price.

They are seeing their funding diverted to these conflicts and the surge

in Iraq.

This is a war that never should have happened. It is a war that

should be brought to an end. Yet the administration is allowing it to

go on and on, mistake after mistake after mistake. This terrible war is

having an effect not only on our troops, who are paying the highest

price, but on our children, our elderly, our schools, our workers, and

the poorest of the poor here at home. Make no mistake about it. While

the President forges ahead with a surge in Iraq, the American people

need a surge at home. Americans see the cost of their health care and

the cost of college going up. What about a surge in our health and

education policy to help meet their needs? What about a surge in those

areas?

I have introduced legislation which would require the President to

get the authority he needs from Congress before moving forward with

further escalation in Iraq. I intend to seek a vote on it, unless the

President changes course. The debate is about what is best for our

troops and our national security. Our forces have served with great

valor. They have done everything they have been asked to do. Sending

more of them into a civil war will not make success any more likely. We

have a responsibility to vote on this issue before it is too late. The

American people deserve to know where the Republicans stand and where

the representatives in the Congress stand.

I look forward to that debate and a vote at the earliest possible

time.