Mr. President, I

think we all can agree that North

Korea remains one of the greatest challenges

to our country’s foreign and national

security policy, and it is clear

that approaches to date haven’t been

successful. This year saw Kim Jong Il

launch seven ballistic missiles into the

sea of Japan and successfully detonate

a nuclear device, defying the clear will

of the international community and

forcing us to confront the reality of a

nuclearized North Korea.

The Bush administration’s policy on

North Korea has been a complete failure.

The 1994 Agreed Framework which

this administration inherited was not

perfect, and the North Koreans cheated

by pursuing uranium enrichment. But

the collapse of the framework, which

had kept North Korea’s fuel rods under

IAEA supervision, has been a disaster.

As the Director of Central Intelligence,

George Tenet testified publicly in 2004,

‘‘the IC judged in the mid-1990s that

North Korea had produced one, possibly

two, nuclear weapons. The 8000

rods the North [now] claims to have

processed into plutonium metal would

provide enough plutonium for several

more.’’

But that is the past; our problem now

is to find a way forward. For far too

many months we have been waiting on

the sidelines, hoping, passively, that

conditions will turn our way. We have

been distracted by Iraq—it took a series

of missile launches and the actual

detonation of a nuclear device for us to

get fully engaged again. And still we

wait for the Six Party Talks to reconvene.

I welcome the news that North Korea

has agreed to come back to the Six

Party Talks. That is a good starting

point, but it cannot be the end point;

the Six Party process has dragged on

for years now, and the only objective

result has been that Kim Jong Il now

has nuclear weapons. There must be results

that come from these talks, and

we must have in place benchmarks for

what success means. I hope that we can

convince Kim Jong Il to give up his nuclear

weapons, but history does not

provide a great deal of reassurance on

that score. At a minimum, we should

seek steps in that direction, such as

partial dismantlement or a freeze on

further production of fissile material,

as a starting point.

Ultimately, North Korea needs to be

brought back into the international

fold. Unfortunately, we can’t do that if

we signal that our true desire is ‘‘regime

change’’ and we continue to

refuse to consider other options, such

as direct negotiations. When dealing

with such an important matter to our

national security, we should not keep

any option off the table. It is high time

for a change of course in President

Bush’s North Korea policy.