men and women, with mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters and husbands and wives.

I think over the last few days, though, there has been a deafening silence, and people standing here and saying what the President is doing is the right thing to do, because it hasn't been the right thing to do, what the President has been doing, and he wants to continue more of the same.

I understand we are now at a point where we are going to talk about a couple of important nominations. We are going to try to get our fiscal house in order, which is not in order, because unless we do something by February 15, basically the Government closes. This is very unusual. I have spoken with the distinguished Republican leader, and one thing we are going to work on together this year, once we get out of this situation with the continuing resolution, is to work together to try to pass appropriations bills. That is good for the institution and good for the country. We are going to try to do that. It may require some late nights and long weeks, but we are going to do that. We have 13 appropriations bills, and we are going to work very hard to get them passed.

So I am terribly disappointed we haven't had the opportunity to vote on Senator WARNER's and Senator LEVIN's resolution, and on the McCain resolution, but we have heard enough about that. We are not going to be able to do that, and we will move on to other things.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Briefly, it is hard for me to remember how many times we were told by the other side last year that you come to the Senate to cast tough votes, but I don't think Senator GREGG's vote was a tough vote. Why would it be a tough vote to vote on supporting the troops? To me, that is an easy vote. We all will be forced, because of the process in the Senate, to cast votes we don't like. If you are in the majority, you get more of those than when you are in the minority. I can't imagine being, in effect, afraid of voting on the Gregg amendment to support the troops. That would be one of the easiest votes we ever cast around here.

Let me conclude by saying I am disappointed, as other members of my party in the Senate are disappointed, we are not having the Iraq debate this week. The distinguished minority whip, in his remarks, summed it up quite well. We will continue to talk about this important subject. There is no more important subject in the country right now. I know we will be debating other proposals in the coming months.

Mr. GREGG. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield.

Mr. GREGG. I was just wondering if the Republican leader, and I ask this question through the Chair, believes that the Democratic leader is correct in his characterization that we have stopped this in a procedural manner. Is it not true that the Democratic leader controls the procedure as to whether there would be a vote? And is it not true, also, that we agreed to the Democratic leader's request that we offer only one amendment but that we just ask we be able to choose our amendment, and they be able to choose their amendment?

Mr. MCCONNELL. The Senator is entirely correct. We kept paring down the options that we wanted to offer in the course of this debate on the most important issue in the country. And at the end, as the Senator from New Hampshire just suggested, we were down to two: one that the majority leader and most of his party favor—and some of ours—and the amendment of the Senator from New Hampshire in support of the troops.

Apparently, the majority wanted to tell us which amendment we would offer.

Mr. GREGG. I thank the Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank the Senator from New Hampshire.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business until 2 p.m. with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, alternating sides when appropriate, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the minority, the second 30 minutes under the control of the majority, during which the Senator from New York, Mr. SCHUMER, and the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KENNEDY, be recognized for 15 minutes each.

The Senator from New Hampshire.

IRAQ

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I want to, once again, state the situation. It has been very well stated by the Republican leader. The simple fact is, we, as members of the minority, requested the right to offer an alternative to the proposal of the majority. That is not an unusual event in the Senate. In fact, it is the purpose of the Senate to debate different approaches.

What we asked as an alternative was very simple, straight forward language. Let me read it again. It simply stated:

> It is the sense of the Congress that Congress should not take any action that will endanger the United States military forces in the field, including the elimination or reduction of funds for troops in the field, as such action with respect to funding would undermine the safety or harm their effectiveness in pursuing their assigned missions.

All this language says is that whether you agree with the President or whether you disagree with the President, whether you support a commitment of more troops or you don't support a commitment of more troops, once the troops are on the ground in the fight, we are going to give them the financial support, the logistical support, the equipment that they need in order to protect themselves and pursue their mission effectively.

Members do not have to support the President to support this language. It is not designed to state the President is right or the President is wrong. It is simply language designed to say that an American soldier deserves the support of the Congress of the United States. That is an elementary responsibility of this Senate.

The fact that the Democratic leadership will not allow Members to vote on this simple statement of support for American troops is a transgression on the purposes of the Senate, which is to express itself relative to the actions of our soldiers in the field and how we will support them.

It is literally impossible to address the debate on Iraq without addressing the most fundamental issue, which is whether our troops are going to be supported when they are asked to defend us in the field. The idea that we can decouple the support for the troops from the issue of policy is absurd on its face, and the position of the Democratic leadership that we should not address the issue of supporting the troops when we address the issue of whether the tactics being pursued by the military commanders in the field are correct—which doesn't happen to be the responsibility of Congress; that is the responsibility of the commanders—is by nature inconceivable, inconsistent, and simply not defensive.

In fact, it is so absurd on its face that I would simply quote the national commander of the American Legion, Mr. Paul Morin, who says:

> We will not separate the war from the warrior.

That is what this is about: whether the Democratic leadership takes the truly indefensible position that in a debate on the issue of Iraq, we do not discuss the support for the person we are asking to go out and defend this Nation.

What this really comes down to is very simple. This resolution would have received broad bipartisan support in this Senate. That is because there are very few Members in this Senate—I would guess virtually none—who don't believe that our obligation as a Senate, as a legislative body which funds the military, that our obligation is to give the soldiers in the field what they need in order to defend themselves and carry out their mission.

So rather than have a vote on our amendment which would have received a large majority in this Senate—much

larger than the proposal put forward as their proposal—they decided not to have a vote at all. Then they claimed that we were responsible for slowing the process.

How inconsistent and indefensible is that statement: I don't have the votes; therefore, I will not allow a vote to happen. But it is your fault that I am not allowing the vote to happen. Really? That only makes sense if you happen to be a true partisan and believe this debate should be a partisan debate.

Somehow my language has been described as ''partisan,'' and the other language has been described as ''bipartisan,'' but the other language has fewer votes than my language. No, this is not true. It is simply a fact that the other side of the aisle does not wish to put their membership in a position of voting for a simple resolution that calls for the support of our troops.

That is an unfortunate statement on where the Democratic Party is today relative to support for the efforts of soldiers in the field. It is hard for me to conceive that there are folks within the community of interest in Washington who feel so strongly about their dislike for the President or his policies that they are unwilling to go on record in support of the soldier who is fighting for us on the streets of Baghdad. But that is the essence of the problem. That is why we are not going to have a vote in the Senate. It is not that the Republican membership has in some way stalled this process. The Republican leader has gone out of his way, he has gone well beyond what many in our party believe maybe we should have done in trying to be accommodating to the insistence of the Democratic leadership that there be no opposition to the one item that they want to bring to the Senate floor.

In my experience in the Senate, when something is brought to the floor of the Senate as controversial as the discussion of how we pursue a war and a war policy, there are going to be a lot of amendments. But the Senate leadership, under the Democratic leader, has said, no, not only will there not be a lot of amendments, there will only be one amendment from our side, and we on the Democratic side will pick the amendment on the Republican side that they can offer, and we will let them offer that but nothing else.

The Republican leader, in an attempt to be responsive, said, OK, if there are only going to be two amendments, we will pick the amendment. And the amendment will simply say that whether you support the President, whether you support his policies, at least you can say you support the troops, the soldiers who are asked to go out and protect America and walk the streets of Baghdad.

But that was a bridge too far for the Democratic leader, a bridge too far for the Democratic membership because they did not want to take that vote even though that would have been a bipartisan vote and would have received significantly more votes than the Democratic proposal.

I don't think there should be any confusion about why we aren't having a vote. We are not having a vote because more people would vote for my amendment than would vote for their amendment, and they don't want to embarrass their membership by having to have them vote for my amendment even though there is nothing controversial about it, unless you consider supporting troops in the field, giving them what they need to fight and defend themselves, to be controversial.

It is an ironic situation. I thank the Republican leader for having offered me the opportunity to bring this amendment forward and for making it fairly clear that we as a membership are willing to be reasonable; that we only ask for a vote on something that we think is important while they ask for a vote on something they think is important.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. How much time does the minority have remaining in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twenty and one-half minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, would you advise me when I have used 6 minutes, and I will defer to my other colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will advise the Senator.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, the majority leader this morning said within my hearing that there is no support for the surge. I don't know why he would say that because, in fact, not only have Members of this Senate unanimously supported, through the confirmation hearing of GEN David Petreaus, one of the people who certainly will be instrumental in executing that surge, but that is what we have been debating for these last weeks, indeed, months: what the new plan should be in Iraq, to deal with what is, obviously, an unacceptable status quo.

I am tempted to wonder out loud if, rather than talking about issues that really matter—such as the issue that the Senator from New Hampshire has asked for a vote on but been denied, whether we will support our troops and refuse to cut off funding while we send them in harm's way—we are seeing a bunch of spin doctoring going on.

But when the majority leader says there is no support for the surge, I would simply disagree because, in fact, at least one of the amendments that has been offered that we have been denied an opportunity to vote on, as the majority leader has done what he is entitled to do, which is to move on to other subjects and to set the Senate agenda, one of those amendments would, in fact, support General Petreaus and the plan he has taken upon himself to execute in Iraq that we are sending, over a period of time, additional reinforcements to secure Baghdad.

So there is substantial support for this plan. The problem is, I am tempted to believe there are some who have simply given up, who don't believe there is any chance of success in Iraq. The problem is, those who have expressed such defeatism, who in this contest of wills say we simply lost ours, have not talked one bit about the consequences of giving up, the huge humanitarian crisis that would occur, the ethnic cleansing that would occur, the fact that another failed state in the Middle East, as in Afghanistan before it, could serve as a launching pad for recruiting and training and exporting of terrorist attacks.

Standing here and suggesting that defeat is something we will accept is, to my view, not a responsible position to take.

So I disagree with those who simply say we have no chance to turn things around. There are those who say ad nauseam that there is ''no military solution in Iraq.'' I would commend to them an article that was written by Victor Davis Hanson that is entitled ''Give Petraeus a Chance.'' Mr. Hanson says:

> . . . in fact, only a military blow to the insurgency will allow the necessary window for the government to gain time, trust, and confidence to press ahead with reform and services.

So, as General Petraeus said, we are engaged in a test of wills. How could it possibly be that we have lost our own will to protect America's national security, to prevent a regional conflict that will inevitably, if it occurs, cost us more in treasure and blood? How is it that America could possibly have lost its will?

I think the Senator from New Hampshire made a good point a moment ago when he said the reason why the majority leader has now taken us off of this issue—which, again, is his sole prerogative as majority leader; that is the power a majority leader has—that the reason we have not been given a chance to vote on the Gregg amendment that says we will not cut off funds, we will not fail to support our troops on the mission they have volunteered to undertake, and which we have sent them on—the real reason, as the Washington Post reported, Senator GREGG's amendment was not allowed to be voted on is because his amendment is likely the ''only measure that could attract 60 votes.''

The USA Today said the majority leader opposed allowing a vote on the amendment because it could have resulted in a situation where the Senate would have been on record opposing cuts in funding for the troops but not the President's policy.

I think it is absolutely imperative—whether it is today or tomorrow or next week or next month, or all of the above—we make it very clear we will not ever cut off our support for the men and women who have undertaken this dangerous mission.

When I went out to Walter Reed on Monday to visit some of the injured veterans of the Iraq conflict, I could not help but be struck by the sort of surreality of that. Here are young men and women who have lost limbs, and many, unfortunately, have lost their lives volunteering to protect us and to bring stability to the Middle East and to allow the Iraqis a better life. They have risked it all, and some have paid that ultimate sacrifice. Yet here in the Senate——

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 6 minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I would ask for 1 remaining minute by unanimous consent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. And here we are in the Senate this week debating about nonbinding resolutions and avoiding the tough votes on whether we will cut off funds to support this mission. Instead, we engage in the continued surreal environment of this Senate by saying: OK, now we have confirmed General Petraeus, one of the people who is going to execute this plan in Iraq. But now, today, we are going to also vote on Admiral Fallon, the head of Central Command, General Petraeus's commander, who will also be in charge of this mission, and GEN George Casey, who has been in charge of coalition forces. Do you know what I predict? We will confirm, as we did General Petraeus, Admiral Fallon and General Casey, and yet there are some who stand up here in the Senate and elsewhere and have the temerity to say: We support you, but we do not support the mission we have asked you to execute.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I ask that the Chair inform me when I have used 6 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be notified.

Mr. VITTER. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, clearly, without doubt, without question, the war in Iraq is the leading concern of the American people, as well it should be. It is a very difficult situation, and a situation that will define our future and our security for years to come. Because it is the dominant, the leading concern of the American people, without any close second, I think it is imperative we have a debate and votes on this crucial question.

I would urge the majority leader to come back to the floor and engage in this debate and move forward with this discussion and accept the very reasonable compromise of the minority leader in narrowing down all of the universe of ideas and resolutions to simply two.

I will freely admit that is not my first preference in terms of this debate. I had always heard before coming here 2 years ago that the Senate was about open debate, unlimited debate, the ability to get your ideas and your amendments and your resolutions to the floor with very few limits. So I thought, particularly in the context of this very serious situation in Iraq, we needed an open debate, we needed more ideas, not fewer, we needed every significant vote that should be taken.

So that was my preference: unlimited debate. But the majority leader rejected that, only would allow very limited votes, very limited debate. At the end of the day—again, it was not my first choice, but at the end of the day, the minority leader said: OK, you want two votes—only two votes—OK. Let's focus on two proposals. Let's have just two votes. But our choice for our one proposal will be the Gregg amendment because we feel so strongly about supporting our troops in the field. And then the majority leader said no, I can't accept that. I need to choose your proposal. I need to choose what you want to put up for a vote.

That is not the tradition of the Senate. And, more importantly, that is not treating this very serious issue, the dominant concern among all Americans, bar none, properly. We need to debate this issue now. We need to vote on this issue now. Again, I urge the majority leader to come back to the floor and engage in this debate this week—now—because the country is concerned now about Iraq. The country has questions, understandably, now about the President's plan. And our troops in the field have questions and uncertainty now about whether we will be standing shoulder to shoulder with them no matter what policy is adopted.

Again, I think the minority leader's proposal yesterday bent over backwards—compromise and compromise and compromise—to reach an ability to have this debate we must have on the floor of the Senate. We wanted far more than two proposals debated. We wanted far more than two votes. But we accepted the majority leader's number. We accepted the majority leader's parameters of just two proposals, just two votes. But surely the minority gets to choose one of those two proposals to discuss, particularly given that this Gregg proposal has broad bipartisan support.

So let's have this Iraq debate that we must have. Let's have key votes that we must have. And let's do it now. I urge the majority leader, again, not to give up, not to reject this very reasonable compromise, bending over backwards by the minority leader to agree to his number of two. Let's take that up. Let's have this debate. Let's have crucial votes. The American people deserve that, given the very tough situation in Iraq. And our men and women in uniform sure as heck deserve that. They sure as heck deserve to hear from us: OK, we know some of you are for the President's surge plan; we know some of you are against it. But what about supporting whatever troops are put in the field? They sure as heck deserve an answer to that question. And they certainly deserve that reassurance.

Let's have that fair debate, and let's have it now.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Madam President, it is interesting that we would be preparing today to have a debate that will not be taking place, and it will not be taking place because it is the prerogative of the leadership to set the agenda of what we do discuss and debate.

I agree with my colleagues who have requested an opportunity to have a full airing of the views, to have a full debate, to have an opportunity to express our support for the men and women in the field, in addition to whatever else we might want to debate on this topic of the most important issue facing our country today.

But getting beyond the procedural and the tit for tat that so often signifies what Washington is about, what fundamentally is this debate about? It is about the global war on terror. It is about the events that unfolded in our country on the morning of September 11, 2001, and the aftermath of all of that, the things that have occurred as our Nation has responded to the attacks that were brought upon our shores, as we have sought to carry out this difficult mission, but one in which we must not waiver, which is this war on terror.

As a result of this war on terror, our troops are in Iraq today, where they have removed a dictator from power and where they have confronted the enemy, which regardless of how someone might have felt about the original decision to go into Iraq, today we are there and we are engaging an enemy that is the very enemy that attacked us here on 9/11.

It is known that in Al Anbar Province it is fundamentally an al-Qaida operation. So to send additional reinforcements to Al Anbar Province to defeat al-Qaida in Iraq is in the best interests of this Nation. It is in our national interest to pacify, to bring some peace to Baghdad, which is the capital city of Iraq, which is essential to the peace and security of that nation, of that budding democracy that is attempting to put itself on its feet, and to bring some stability to that capital city by additional reinforcements of American troops in a new plan I think is reasonable.

We cannot get so focused on whether some in this body cannot work with this President, do not want to support any of his policies. But let's look at the people who are going to carry out this policy, the generals who are going to be in the field.

In the past few days, as has been stated, we have approved by a near—well, I guess it was unanimous; it was 81 to 0, I believe—the sending of General Petraeus as our new commander of

allied forces in Iraq. I recall his testimony in the Armed Services Committee where he clearly said he believed in this plan and thought it had a reasonable chance of success. Why would we not give a reasonable chance of success a chance to succeed? Why would we not stand behind our men and women who are willing to go into harm's way to carry out this plan and see if they have an opportunity to succeed?

The goal of this new plan is threefold. First, we have to have some stability in Baghdad. We have to continue to defeat al-Qaida in Al Anbar Province. But then beyond that there are other elements to the plan. There obviously needs to be a political reconciliation. There needs to be a political settlement. But that will never take place if there is not some modicum of stability, if we do not bring down the sectarian violence and other violence in Iraq to a manageable level.

We then have an opportunity for the political settlement to take place between the Shias and Sunnis, and the Kurds in the north, so they can all come together and begin to bind as a new nation, as a new country, as a new government—a government, by the way, that has only been in place about 9 months.

In addition to that, we then have a third angle to this, which I think is so vitally important, which is the economic reconstruction, the economic development, the opportunity for there to be jobs, for there to be opportunities for folks to find a way to make a better life for themselves and their children, so they can reach their aspirations, and do it in an atmosphere of freedom, do it in an atmosphere of democracy and respect for one another. That is the goal.

What would happen if we do not give this plan a chance, if we do not see if it has an opportunity to carry out and have an opportunity for success? What is the alternative? Well, we would then have failed in this test of wills. Our enemies have clearly stated they believe if they kill enough Americans, if they cause enough grief to our mothers, if they cause enough harm to our troops, we will not stand up, we will move on, we will find an easier way, and we will not resist those who would bring the destruction of our country upon us.

Their stated aims are very clear. They want us out of the Middle East. They want to be able to get America out of the Middle East. They do not want us there because they know we are what stands between them and the opportunity of creating a radical Islamic new caliphate in that region of the world, and the danger that would all bring about.

The new intelligence estimate on Iraq we have seen gives a window into what would happen if we had a precipitous withdrawal over the next 12 to 18 months. It would not be a pretty picture. Sectarian violence would ensue. Unquestionably, we would have a Shia-dominated Middle East. Already they are, through their proxies, in Lebanon, in Syria. They have a strong alliance with them. They are trying to take over the Palestinian movement.

Over the next 12 to 18 months, the assessments would be very dire of what would take place if we were to be out of the region: an escalation of violence, a diminished chance for stability, no chance for positive change.

The estimates suggest that a key aim in Iraq is to stabilize the situation from the standpoint of violence, enough to let the political changes that have to happen take place. I am going to quote from the estimate. It says from the public version:

> If strengthened, Iraqi security forces more loyal to the government, supported by coalition forces, are able to reduce levels of violence and establish more effective security for Iraq's population, and Iraqi leaders can have an opportunity to begin the process of political compromise necessary for longer-term stability, political progress, and economic recovery.

Isn't that a better way? Isn't that what we all want, what the Senate should be on record as supporting—this opportunity for our troops to be successful, and not only to be in harm's way fighting for our country, but also to know that the Senate stands behind them, will not cut off their funds, will stand with them as they go into battle, and will stand with them as they do the hard work of freedom—work done by many other generations of America any time they have been called upon to stand for freedom, stand for the rule of law, and to give this budding new democracy an opportunity to take hold and take root.

Madam President, I am disappointed that today we will not have an opportunity to have a fuller debate, that I won't have the opportunity to be on record with a vote reflecting where I stand, which all of us should be willing to do—take a stand, take a position supporting our troops.

I personally would also be in support of this plan which I believe gives us the best opportunity for success, which is the only plan out there. Those who would not give this plan a chance owe the American people an alterative but one that would have a reasonable chance for success. Success is what we are after. A victory in this part of the world would send a strong message to our enemies. So I am disappointed we will not vote today.

I hope the majority leader will reconsider and come back to have an earnest debate and take the votes that are necessary to be taken.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, we have heard a debate over the last hour about where we stand on the resolutions and debating the escalation of the war in Iraq. Here is where we are at the end of the day. We can dot all the i's, cross all the t's, and do all of the legalistic parsing that we want. The minority is blocking a vote on the issue that the American people wish to hear us on: Do you support or oppose the escalation? It is that simple.

The minority's action ratifies the President's escalation. And any Senator who voted to prevent the Warner resolution from coming to the floor is saying to his or her constituents: I support that escalation.

We know what is going on. The minority is torn between loyalty to their President and following the will of their voters. I have not seen a single State where, at least from the polling data, the public supports the escalation. There should be a simple vote, and not as an end to this debate but as a beginning to this debate. The minority is tying itself in a pretzel so that there will not be a vote.

Now, the Gregg resolution is missing two words. Look at it. Read it. It doesn't have the word ''surge,'' and it doesn't have the word ''escalation.'' It is ambiguously worded so that it tries to tie support for the troops with the escalation, but without saying so. It is a resolution that is intended to befuddle, perplex, obfuscate, and to hide.

The good news is that the American people don't follow the details of all of this debate. They don't have the time. They are busy with their lives, their families, their jobs, the joys and sorrows of life. But they follow the big picture. The big picture is simple: Senator REID has labored mightily to have a clear, unobstructed, unobliterated vote on whether you support or oppose the escalation.

The minority leader, backed by all but two of his membership, has said we do not want to vote; we want to let the President go forward with the escalation, without taking responsibility for it. The public is seeing that. The public understands.

My good friend from Mississippi was talking in the hallway. He said the job of the Senate is to take the tough votes. You bet it is. It is not whether we are saying we support the troops—which everybody agrees that we do—in an ambiguously designed amendment to support escalation and get their way, and those against it get their way. The bottom line is simple: the tough vote is ''yes'' or ''no'' on the escalation.

Again, I salute our majority leader. He has done everything to try to bring that vote to the floor. The minority leader has done everything to obstruct that vote. The good news is that we will have plenty of further opportunity to get that vote and, make no mistake about it, this majority, in the belief that the escalation is wrong, in the belief that there is no strategy in Iraq

other than to police a civil war, which no one bargained for, will be resolute and we will find ample opportunities to not only get a sense-of-the-Senate vote on whether you support or oppose the escalation, but to move further and ratchet up the pressure on the President so that he changes his strategy.

The number of people in America who believe that our strategy in Iraq is succeeding gets smaller every day. I think it is below 1 in 4 right now, which means that close to a majority of Republicans don't agree with the strategy. Obviously, if the President came here 3 years ago and said we are going to have our troops on Haifa Street patrolling a civil war between the Sunnis and Shiites—how many people would have voted for that? How many Americans would have supported it? But that is exactly what we are doing. The vast majority of the troops that the President is asking for will continue to do just that and only that.

So this debate is coming only to a temporary close. One thing stands out clearly: the Republican minority is allowing the President to go forward with the escalation. It is supporting the escalation but doesn't want to vote to say so. My colleagues, that will not wash. The American people are too smart. They are too concerned. They are too worried about the brave men and women over there risking their lives as Sunnis shoot at Shiites and Shiites shoot at Sunnis. To hold the minority's feet to the fire, we will be resolute in making sure that happens.

The Gregg resolution is obfuscatory. It is designed to give people cover who don't want to say yes or no. But make no mistake about it, the people want a yes or a no. They want us to act on that yes or no as we come forward with the supplementary budget request next month. And this majority, limited as it may be, will endeavor to do just that.

Mr. KENNEDY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. SCHUMER. I am happy to yield to my colleague from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. First of all, I commend the Senator from New York for an excellent presentation. As I understand it from his comments, the principal question before the country now is the whole issue of a surge and the certain timeliness of it. We know that the President was able to extend, for example, marines in place over there and get a certain number of troops over there, but we know this is something that is going to happen in the future. A chunk of the troops are going over in February, another group in March, and another group in April.

In the Armed Services Committee yesterday, we learned it is not just the 20,000 the President talked about, but that number is going to be exceeded. We heard from General Pace.

As I understand what the good Senator has said, we have had four surges previously over there. This concept, this idea, has been utilized previously and none were successful. Secondly, as I understand what the Senator has said, the leading generals, General Abizaid and General Casey, previously suggested that this concept did not make sense; it only inflamed the insurgency. Is that the Senator's understanding?

Mr. SCHUMER. Yes, indeed.

Mr. KENNEDY. The third part of the Senator's speech, which I hope our colleagues will listen to, is the reference to the independent study by Baker and Hamilton, where a bipartisan recommendation said that such an activity would not make sense.

So does it make sense when we have that kind of lineup, so to speak, where we have the military, the background of surges, the independent study made by Republicans and Democrats alike—we are faced now with a surge, so we have to take action and express ourselves. Doesn't it make sense for this body to express itself on that particular policy issue? Isn't that the responsible thing to do?

Mr. SCHUMER. Indeed. I thank my colleague for asking the question. Again, the minority says it is our job to take some tough votes. Here, here. We want to take what is a tough vote for some: Are you for the surge? Are you for the escalation or are you against it? They are doing everything they can to avoid it. But as my good friend from Massachusetts has so aptly pointed out, the bottom line is that now is the time to go on record—now, before most of the troops are there; now, when we can ratchet up pressure on the President to change his policy, as the independent study group said, and so many generals have said. I might add, from the press reports, the Prime Minister of Iraq doesn't want them. We are almost in Alice in Wonderland here.

I will say one other thing. The good news is simple: the American people get it. They know that the war in Iraq doesn't have a strategy. They know it is headed toward a dead end. They know that policing a civil war makes no sense, and they know what we are trying to do, which is forcing a ''yes'' or ''no'' vote—get a ''yes'' or ''no'' vote and move forward to change that strategy. No amount of wordsmithing on the other side is going to change that fact.

Today, the Republican minority said: We are for the surge, and we will let the President go forward and do it.

I yield to my colleague for another question.

Mr. KENNEDY. Just a final point. Madam President, the Senator has stated it well. Basically, the recommendations of those generals I mentioned—and General Abizaid said he had inquired of all the combat commanders—all of the combat commanders—whether there should be an enhanced presence in Baghdad, and he testified before the Armed Services Committee that we should not.

But isn't the point the Senator is making is to underline what all of the generals have said and Maliki has said; that is, it is a political resolution, it is a political decision? What we are seeing now is resorting to a military solution when the independent study commission, the generals on the ground, and the political leaders in that country have said what is necessary now is a political resolution, a political decision, and we find an administration that has effectively discarded that as an option and is going to the military option.

As I understand, the Senator believes we ought to have a political resolution, political courage by the parties in power there; that we here and the U.S. troops can't care more about the freedom of the Iraqis than the Iraqi people and they have to stand up, step up, and be willing to make their judgments.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Senator is exactly right. And I will add one other point to his very prescient comments. Let us say we have this surge and then troops leave after a certain amount of time—some say the end of the summer, some say it will go on 3, 4, 5 years. What is going to happen then if we don't have a political solution the good Senator asks about? The Sunni and Shia will resume fighting, and we will have accomplished nothing. We will have seen the lives of some of our brave men and women be taken from them, American soldiers. We will have created more havoc in Iraq. And we will have, again, delayed the very political solution my friend from Massachusetts talks about, which is essential.

If there had been a change in Government, if there had been a change in strategy, perhaps—I can't say because I don't know what it would be, given this administration hasn't changed anything—maybe the American people, maybe some on this side of the aisle would say: Give it a chance. But to send more of our brave troops over there when there is no change in strategy, when it is just increasing policing of a civil war, and when, at the end of this so-called surge, this escalation, nothing will have changed, the American people have every right to ask: To what end?

That is what we are asking. That is why we want a simple vote. And that is why today is going to go down in history as a day when this Republican minority in this House said to the President: We are supporting your surge. We don't want to vote on it, but we are allowing it to happen. We are encouraging it to happen. And the very rubberstamp nature, when the minority was in the majority, that brought them to such trouble in November of 2006 is simply continuing.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, will the Senator yield for a final point?

Mr. SCHUMER. I yield to my colleague from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I had the opportunity to read the national intelligence report on Monday. There has been both an intelligence report and a declassified report. Even in

the declassified report, would the Senator say, in his evaluation of the best of the intelligence community that has been reviewing this situation that every aspect of that intelligence report is basically in support of the conclusions the Senator has outlined here? This is not something just the Senators from New York or Massachusetts are making up. This is a conclusion which has been made by the intelligence agencies about what the nature of the battle is in Baghdad today.

Mr. SCHUMER. I thank the Senator. Once again, he is right on the money. He is right on the money.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has consumed his 15 minutes under the order.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be given 1 more minute to finish my point, and then I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. The Senator is right on the money, and it is, again, a pattern. The experts—intelligence, military, diplomatic—tell the administration what they are doing is wrong, tell the administration that all the signs on the ground point to a policy that is failing, and they keep their head in the sand and just go forward. It is a tragedy. It is a tragedy when truth is not exalted and when there is a desire to stifle debate, as has happened in the administration and is happening on the floor of the Senate today.

We all love this country, everyone in this Chamber, regardless of politics, but at least for me—and I dearly love America—every day we delay hurts us a little more and a little more and a little more. We dig ourselves deeper in a hole from which it will be harder and harder to extricate ourselves.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, how much time do I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 14 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Chair.

Madam President, to pick up where the good Senator from New York stopped, we had yesterday at Saint Francis Xavier in Hyannis, MA—I was unable to attend because I was here in the Senate—the funeral of a young serviceman who was lost. At the end of last week, a young serviceman named Callahan from Woburn, MA—his fourth time in Iraq, a father of four—was lost.

Woburn, MA, is a very interesting blue-collar community. They had the highest percentage of casualties in the Vietnam war of any community in my State. They had high school class after high school class that joined the Marines and suffered devastating casualties in Vietnam. It is also a storybook community on civic action—water contamination in that community resulted in the deaths of a number of children there. But the community is made up of extraordinary men and women and families. They are weathering through this extreme, extraordinary tragedy.

Sixty-four brave soldiers from Massachusetts have been lost, killed, and this is the overriding, overarching issue in question: What can we do after 4 years where our service men and women have done everything we have asked them to do? They have served in Iraq longer than it took to end World War II, to sweep through Africa, to cross Western Europe, cross through the Pacific, and they are still out there. Many of us believe, as we mentioned a few moments ago, that the solution lies not in the increasing surge but in a political resolution and determination and decisions made by the Iraqis for their own future. It is, after all, their country.

Let me talk for a few minutes about the other costs of this war, the $200 billion which is in the President's budget for the war in Iraq and what the implications of that will be, so that Americans can understand more completely the costs.

It comes from children's health, as the President's budget underfunds the CHIP program by $8 billion. That program has been extremely successful in providing health care to low-income children.

Will the Chair let me know when I have 2 minutes remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. KENNEDY. Yet there are still more than 8 million children in America with no health coverage, and there is a health care crisis for our Nation's children. But what does the President propose to do about it? His budget will make the crisis even worse by cutting 400,000 children from the Children's Health Insurance Program.

It comes from our seniors and our disabled citizens. The President's budget cuts $66 billion from Medicare, which is a lifeline to millions of retirees and disabled Americans. If the President has his way, more than 700,000 people in Massachusetts who rely on Medicare could see the quality of their care go down.

It comes from those battling mental illnesses. Each year, 25 percent of Americans suffer from some sort of mental illness. We owe it to them and their families to do all we can to ensure they are able to lead full and productive lives. Yet the President's budget cuts mental health assistance by $159 million.

It comes from Hurricane Katrina victims. Despite massive ongoing needs on the gulf coast, the President's budget offers no additional assistance to help people rebuild their lives.

It comes from the Nation's defense against epidemics, such as the flu, as the President proposes to slash funding for the Centers for Disease Control by $165 million.

It comes from Medicaid, our health care lifeline for the poor, which the President intends to cut by $50 billion over the next 10 years. In Massachusetts, 880,000 citizens depend on Medicaid, and this budget places them at risk.

It comes from our children's education. The President's budget underfunds the No Child Left Behind reforms by almost $15 billion. In my State of Massachusetts, these cuts would leave behind more than 51,000 children. Nationwide, we have 3.5 million children who are not participating in the program whatsoever. Yet they will have a requirement to meet sufficiency in the year 2012.

It comes from our youngest children. By cutting $107 million from the Head Start Program, the President fails to give the youngest children a strong start in life. This is a program which is tried, tested, and true.

It comes from our students with special needs. When we passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, we made a promise to disabled children and their families that they were to receive the education they deserve. President Bush's budget breaks that promise by cutting funding to IDEA by $290 million. We made the commitment we were going to provide 40 percent of all the funding. We are now at about 18 percent of funding, and we are reducing that. It is shifting the burden onto the families and the local communities.

It comes from school safety. Our children ought to be able to go to school without fearing violence, but this budget cuts funding for Safe and Drug-Free Schools. With all the challenges of schools and violence in schools, it cuts back the funding for Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

It comes at the expense of our teachers. Over the next decade, this Nation will need to hire 2 million more teachers, but this budget cuts funding for teacher quality grants.

It comes at the expense of students. At a time when college costs are skyrocketing, the President's budget completely eliminates the Perkins Loan Program, which over 500,000 students depend on to help them afford a college education. We know that a college degree is a ticket to a bright and better future, but this budget closes the college door instead of opening it wider. There are already 400,000 young people who are qualified to get into our fine community colleges, public colleges, and private colleges and don't do so because of a lack of funding.

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. Madam President, listen to this: In Massachusetts alone, there are 25,000 people waiting to be enrolled in job training programs.

In Boston, there are 25 applicants for each job training slot. There are 78,000 jobs that are out there today that are looking for trained people, 25 people for every training slot, 275,000 people who are unemployed. What is wrong with

this picture? We are cutting back on the training opportunities for those individuals to be able to pay more in taxes and provide more hopeful futures for their children.

This budget can find $200 billion more for the war in Iraq but not a dime for people at home trying to better their lives. They come from families who need help putting food on the table. The President wants to cut the Food Stamp Program by $600 million, leaving nearly 300,000 families wondering where they are going to find the next meal for themselves and their children.

I have had the chance to visit our absolutely spectacular food bank in Boston, and they talk about the increased numbers that they already have. This is going to even put more pressure on those food banks and more pressure on those families. It comes from the poor struggling against the bitter cold, as the budget cuts 17 percent of the funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps low-income families afford to heat their homes.

In my State, if you use home heating oil you need to fill your tank generally three times a winter—three times a winter. Families are down now where they are only able to fill—the needy who qualify for this—less than half a tank for the whole winter. We know what is happening. People make the choices between the prescription drugs they need, the food they need, and the heat they need for their homes. We are cutting that program by 17 percent.

Perhaps most tragically of all, the money for the war in Iraq comes from our veterans themselves. Nearly half the troops returning from Iraq will require health care services to cope with the physical or mental toll of the war. Yet the President's budget underfunds veterans' health. It provides only half the increase in funding required for the VA to keep pace with the needs of our veterans.

In Massachusetts alone, there are 453,000 veterans who have served our country when they were called to duty, and we have a moral obligation to do all we can for them.

This is the cost of this war. This is all for a war that never should have happened, for a war that should be brought to an end. Yet this administration is allowing it to go on and on, with 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 poor here at home.

While the President forges ahead with a surge in Iraq, the American people need a surge here at home. Americans see the cost of health care and the cost of college going up. What about a surge in our health and education policies to meet those needs? Americans here at home worry about their economic security, about their jobs and stagnant wages, how they can support themselves on their wages. How about a surge here at home to help meet their needs?

Last week, we met with our Nation's mayors. They described the problem of school dropouts, how these young people are turning to crime in our communities, the proliferation of murders and youth homicides and suicides. Where is the surge to address that problem? No wonder the American people are growing angrier and angrier as the war wages on. They expect Congress to be an effective restraint on the President and his abuse of the War Powers Act.

Opposition to the escalation is clear already. How much clearer does it have to be before Republicans in Congress and the President finally respond to the voice of the American people? When will this war be brought to an end? An escalation now would be an immense mistake, compounding the original misguided decision to invade Iraq. Public support for the war does not exist. There is no support for this escalation. We have surged our forces four times in the past, and each time the situation hasn't changed.

The President cannot continue to unilaterally impose his failing policy on Americans who have already rejected it. Congress has the responsibility to stop the President from sending more of our sons and daughters to die in this civil war. The legislation on which the Democrats seek a vote is our first effort to meet that responsibility. It is our chance to go on record in opposition to the surge. It is a clarion call for change.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Chair.

Last week, the new National Intelligence Estimate confirmed the nightmare scenario unfolding for our troops in Iraq. The country is sliding deeper into an abyss of civil war, with our brave men and women caught in the middle of it. The prospects for halting the escalating sectarian violence is bleak, with greater chaos and anarchy looming and many additional U.S. casualties inevitable.

It is abundantly clear that what we need is not a troop surge but a diplomatic surge, working with other countries in the region. Sending more troops into the Iraq civil war is not the solution to Iraq's political problems. Not only does President Bush fail to see that reality, but he is also going out of his way to deny and defy it.

Congress needs to express its opposition to this strategy. If the President refuses to change course, we must act to change it ourselves to protect our troops and end this misguided war. The war today is not the war Congress authorized 4 years ago. It is now a civil war. The war today is not about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction or alleged relationship with al-Qaeda, it is Iraqi against Iraqi. Iraq is at war with itself, and American soldiers are caught in the middle.

Madam President, it is time for the Members of this body to stand up and take a position on the issue of the surge.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I rise for a few moments to address the subjects that have been discussed for the last 30 minutes. First of all, I rise in particular to lend my support to Senator MCCONNELL who has seen to it that the Senate is able to fully express itself on the issues before us in Iraq. No one should be confused about this debate. There are many opinions here, and every one of them deserves the right to be expressed.

Secondly, I rise in support of the President's plan, and I am going to explain why in just a second. First, however, the Senator from New York made a statement a minute ago that I want to open my remarks with.

The Senator from New York said not many people are paying attention to what we debate on the floor of the Senate, that they are too busy working in their daily lives. That may very well be right, but I want to tell you who is listening to every word. First, it is the men and women in our Armed Forces, their families, and their loved ones. All you have to do is go to Iraq, where I have been many times, go to any mess hall or almost any command post, and CNN and Fox are streaming constantly. Our men and women watch what we say, so what we say on this floor is important. The resolutions we send, binding or not, should not send mixed signals.

There is another audience that listens to what we say, and they are our enemies. They listen as well. Those networks are their intelligence agencies. The messages we send should not be a message which relays a lack of confidence to our troops or to our Commander in Chief.

I am on the Foreign Relations Committee. I have spent 20 of the last 28 hours of committee meetings listening to experts from a variety of resources, and two things became quite clear. There were varying opinions on whether a surge would work. Some thought it would conclusively; many thought it would not. Most gave it varying degrees of potential success. Without exception, however, everyone I heard testify, when asked the question: What would be the ramifications of withdrawal or redeployment, everyone, in one degree or another, said there would be tens of thousands of lives lost, and possibly millions, and the sectarian violence that we are trying to quell now could spread through the region.

The way I see it, we have two choices right now at this stage of the game. Choice one is an opportunity for success. Choice two is a recipe for disaster. I choose the opportunity for success. I think the message we ought to send to our troops is that we support them, we wish them Godspeed, and we pray for their success.

A second message we need to send, which this debate has very helpfully done, is a message to al-Malaki and the assembly in Iraq and the people of Iraq that we came to their country with three objectives, two of which we have secured. One objective was to seek out the weapons of mass destruction the entire world believed were there. Second was to allow a constitution to be written and a free election to be held. Both of those things have been accomplished.

The last most elusive goal that we had was to secure the nation and train the Iraqi military so it could carry on that security and let that fledgling democracy go forward. That third goal, which has been elusive, has gotten closer. The President's strategy to send additional troops to Anbar and to Baghdad requires the absolute cooperation of the Iraqis and the commitment of their military to assist side by side. If they blink and look the other way, they will have failed themselves. If we blink and we look the other way, we will have failed not only them but we will have failed the people of our country.

Make no mistake about it, the war in Iraq that we are now in is not the war we entered, but it is the war we are in, and those are the words of our President. Regardless of where mistakes may have been made, those of us, and I am one of those, who voted to support this when we went into Iraq did not vote for failure. I hope and I pray that our soldiers will be successful, that al-Malaki and the Iraqi military will come through and perform, and I am going to do everything I can to give them that support because I choose an opportunity for success over a recipe for failure.

With regard to the mistakes that have been made, I want to be crystal clear because there are some awfully selective memories on the floor of the Senate. I remember what I believed when I voted to go into Iraq. I remember what the National Intelligence Estimate said. And I remember the horror of 9/11 and the fear of weapons of mass destruction. We voted to do what every other member of the United Nations voted on in Resolution 1441, and that was to seek out what the world thought was there. While we didn't find the smoking gun, we found a lot of the components and a lot of the evidence. We found the 400,000 bodies in mass graves and the tyranny of a horrible dictator in Saddam Hussein. We accomplished our goal of deposing him and allowing the Iraqis to determine a free democratic society.

In the critical days of this battle, it is time for us to stand forward and stand strong and give this opportunity for success that the President has proposed a chance to succeed, rather than subscribe to a recipe of failure. These are trying times, and I respect the opinions of every Member of this body expressed on this floor, but remember who our audiences are and how important it is that the message that we send not be mixed, not be one of a political message but be a message of commitment and resolve.

I will support the President not out of partisanship, not out of blind loyalty, but I will support the President because the evidence submitted in all of the hearings in the Foreign Relations Committee told me we have two choices: We can choose an opportunity to succeed or we can subscribe to a recipe for failure. I choose success, and I pray God's blessings on our men and women in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, as a new Member of this body, I must tell you that I am frustrated and disappointed. I am disappointed that the Republicans are blocking a vote on whether we support or oppose the President's plan to add additional troops to Iraq. I can tell you that is the issue of the day. That is what my constituents are asking of us, and I think they have a right to expect that the Members of this body are willing to go on record either for or against the President's plan to add additional troops to Iraq.

I have listened to my colleagues. I have listened to my colleagues in committee, and I have listened to my colleagues on this floor, and I think the majority of us want to go on record opposing the surge. Both Democrats and Republicans oppose it. I think there is a bipartisan group that can provide the consensus in this body to go on record against the surge.

Several months ago, the President said we were going to have a new plan in Iraq. Shortly after that, the Iraq Study Group came out with its report. To me, this has been the best analysis of the situation that we have before us. The study group is composed of distinguished members, and it was a creation of the Congress. Secretary Baker, who cochaired the group, served in three administrations and has broad experience in government. Mr. Hamilton, who served in the other body on the Foreign Relations Committee, the Committee on International Relations it is called over there, has served with great distinction both as chairman and ranking member. The other members of the committee—they said we cannot win in Iraq through our military efforts. That is not going to bring success in Iraq. The Iraqis must step forward and defend their own country and we must move forward with new diplomatic efforts. We need ''a new diplomatic offensive'' is what they called it, and they said: We need to start that before December 31, 2006. The ability of the United States to influence events within Iraq is diminishing. We still have not seen that new offensive diplomatic effort.

GEN George Casey said, ''It has always been my view that heavy and sustained American military presence was not going to solve the problems in Iraq over the long term.''

We got the President's plan and the President's plan was more of the same, stay the course but with more U.S. military presence. We had 3 weeks of hearings before the Foreign Relations Committee. Military expert after military expert, foreign policy expert after foreign policy expert, told us that there is a deterioration in Iraq and our policies are not working and we need to move in a new direction. We need to come to grips with the fact that the Iraqis must stand up and defend their own country and we must engage the international community much more aggressively.

I congratulate Senator WARNER and Senator LEVIN for coming forward with a compromise resolution that allows us to go on record opposed to the increased American military presence in Iraq. I do not agree with everything that is in that resolution, but I do think it clearly puts the Senate on record against the increased surge of American troops in Iraq, and that is our responsibility. That is what we should be doing. We should not hide behind procedural roadblocks to avoid voting on that issue. That is the most important issue facing this Nation today, and we should be willing to vote on that issue. It is not about the President of the United States. It is about this body carrying out its responsibility. That is what each of us has a responsibility to do.

Why am I so much against the increase in the U.S. military presence in Iraq? Let me first start with the numbers. The President said the surge would involve 21,500 additional American troops in Iraq. That is not the case. Michael Gilmore, the Assistant Director for National Security at the Congressional Budget Office, testified yesterday before our Budget Committee, and he said it is not going to be 21,500, it is going to be closer to 48,000 additional American troops because the 21,500 are the frontline combat troops. You need the support staff in order to support the 21,500.

The budget the President submitted to us said that is going to cost about $5.6 billion, but CBO now says it is going to be closer to $20 to $27 billion of additional cost, just with the surge, in addition to what we are already spending. The President claims his budget is to balance in 5 years, but he has no cost for the Iraq war beyond 2008.

The numbers speak for themselves. The President is asking us to go along with stay the course but at a higher cost, both in American military presence and the costs to American taxpayers in this country.

The situation in Iraq is deteriorating. Every person who has come before us who is an expert in this area has acknowledged that. There is a civil war in Iraq, and Americans have paid a very heavy price for our commitment

in Iraq—over 3,000 dead and many more with life-changing injuries. There have been hundreds of billions of dollars spent. That represents missed opportunities in America—money we need to strengthen our military and national defense. We have used our National Guard and reservists. We should be supporting them, improving the quality of life for our soldiers and for our veterans. Our soldiers have served with great distinction and valor. We owe it to them to get it right. We owe it to them to do everything we can for a successful outcome in Iraq. That is why it is our responsibility, on behalf of our soldiers, to take up this issue.

We have lost our focus in the war against terror, we have weakened U.S. influence internationally, and, yes, we have lost other opportunities beyond defense because those hundreds of billions of dollars we spent could have been spent to balance our budget, could have been spent to increase our commitment to national priorities such as education and health care and the environment. But we have lost those issues.

The first order of business for us should be to go on record against increasing the American military presence in Iraq. That should be our first order of business. But then we need to do more. I opposed the war from the beginning. I voted against it in the other body. I have been a critic of the President in the management of the war, in his failure to properly engage the international community both before and after going into Iraq, and the decision made by someone in the White House to take out the Iraqi security forces when we went in, that was a mistake. I have been pretty consistent against the President, but we need to do more than pass this resolution. I think we should take up this resolution first. This is the first order of business. But then we need to do more.

The Iraqis have a responsibility to take care of their own security needs in the midst of a civil war. We need to engage the international community with a diplomatic and political initiative so the Government of Iraq has the confidence of the ethnic communities. This is sectarian violence. We need to change the way the Iraqis are doing business and help them through diplomatic efforts. We need to engage the international community. We need more assistance in training Iraqi security forces. You can't do it all by Americans; we need the international community. We need the international community to help us with the humanitarian crisis that is in Iraq. The number of refugees, displaced individuals, is in the millions. We need the help of the international community to deal with the humanitarian crisis. You are not going to have peace in Iraq until you deal with that.

We need the help of the international community on the infrastructure improvements, the economy of Iraq. The American taxpayers cannot do it alone, and we have wasted a lot of our taxpayer dollars in Iraq. We need the international community to help us. In short, we need a new direction, a plan that includes bringing some of our combat troops home, to make it clear to the Iraqis we are not going to be there indefinitely, to make it clear to the international community we expect the Iraqis to take care of their own security needs. That is what we need.

But first things first. Let's take a vote on the President's plan. Let's get that done. Let's stop using procedural roadblocks to prevent a vote in this body but to vote for or against the President's plan to bring more troops to Iraq.

Then we should consider additional options to make it clear it is our responsibility to help bring about a new direction for American involvement in Iraq.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I have been on the floor of the Senate for the last half hour, listening to my colleague in what is, in fact, a very important debate for this country. I say that, even though the wringing of hands would suggest that somehow the debate is being blocked and the will of the Senate has been thwarted. I suggest quite the opposite. It has become a finger-pointing in a procedural way.

I believe the Republican leader came to the floor yesterday and said let's have a couple of votes, several votes; you can vote up or down on the Levin-Warner resolution; you can vote up or down on the Gregg resolution. It was then the leadership on the majority side, the Democratic side, blocked it. I think the American people are wise to the tactics at hand. They are not unaware, and they are frustrated by what is going on in Iraq today. Clearly, we are focused. Whether it is the Congress of the United States or a vast majority of the American people, we are becoming increasingly critical of a war that has frustrated many of us.

The Senator from Maryland voted against it. He said so a few moments ago. I voted for it. At the same time, I grow increasingly critical, as do many of the citizens of my State, as to what will be the future, what will be our success and/or failure and at a cost of how many more American lives.

I am critically concerned that this Government in Iraq now stand up. We have allowed them to form and to shape and to vote. They now have a Constitution. They now must lead. In leading, I hope it could be to stability to the region and that it will not offset and throw out of balance what the free world looks at and says is very important and that is, of course, the war on terror and the general stability of the Middle East.

Indeed, I think much has been lost in the debate around this country as to the significance of the Middle East itself. I was extremely pleased last week when that kind of an elder statesman of our country, Henry Kissinger, came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and in a very real and important way, and in a bipartisan way, said: Let's not forget our perspective. While for the short term and for the moment we are focused on Iraq, as we should be, let's not fail to recognize that since World War II, we have been in the Middle East to bring stability to the region for a safer, more stable Western World.

I don't think there is any question about that. He was frank about it when he stressed diplomacy as an important tool. I have long advocated frank, open talks amongst our friends and neighbors around the world, not only about the region but about the role of Iraq within the region and what we must do. However, Dr. Kissinger also stressed that, under the present conditions in Iraq, withdrawal or the signs of withdrawal is simply not an option for America's forces. So anyone who comes to the floor today and says: Oh, but it is an option and we ought to start now, or we ought to send all the signals to our friends and neighbors around the world that we are beginning to pull back, is going against a trend that I think is critically important. They could set in motion the kind of activity in Iraq that could bring about a phenomenal genocide and the possibility of neighbors tumbling in on top of neighbors to create conflict in the Middle East that could bring down the whole of the region. If that were to happen, then I am quite confident that those who want to withdraw would find themselves in a very precarious situation. What do we do? Do we go back in with greater force to stabilize the region, when friendly, moderate Arab nations are now tumbling into war because we would no longer stand or we would no longer force, through a diplomatic process, those countries of the world to come together to work with us, to cooperate?

While most agree that the current situation in Iraq must be dealt with politically—and we have heard that time and again—and economically, our military involvement is critical to provide the Iraqis the stability they need in this new democratic process. I don't mind pegging timelines a little bit and I don't mind thresholds and measurements and I think it is important we not only send that message but that we get it done, we get it done for the sake of our position in Iraq and certainly forcing the Iraqi Government to move—those are all phenomenally important issues.

Let me stress two last facts. It is quite simple. The 116th from Idaho, the largest deployment of Idaho's troops in this war, was there and served and served honorably and proudly and the work they did was phenomenally important and we are proud of them. Let me also suggest that while many will say the general we now send to Iraq is the best military mind we have available at the moment, the author of the

Army's war handbook on terror, we are saying to General Petraeus: You are the best there is, go forth and be successful, but, oh, by the way, we don't agree with the mission—what kind of a mixed message is that we now send to our military?

The Senator from Georgia was right. The world is listening to this debate. Our men and women in uniform are listening to this debate. The enemies of the cause are listening and saying: Oh, the Senate of the United States is getting cold feet. Our opportunities are at hand. All we have to do is wait them out. All we have to do is accelerate the violence, and they will turn out the lights in the green zone and go home.

Then the world, at least the Iraqi world, will erupt in a civil conflict, a civil war of phenomenal proportion.

Those are the realities we deal with today. I hope this Senate stays on point. This is an issue that is critical to the future of our country, to the future of the free world, to the region of the Middle East, to any kind of stability we hope could be brought there. I hope we have the votes—and they ought to be up or down—and I don't mind being on the record at all. They need to be substantive, they need to have the force and effect of law, just not the ring of the politics of the Chamber, because that is what we are getting today—a heavy dose of politics and very little substance.

We hide behind procedure? I don't think so. Let us bring these issues forward. The Craig resolution? Up or down. Levin-Warner? Up or down. What is wrong with those votes? That is what we were sent here to do. I would hope our leadership could bring us to that.

So, to reiterate:

Many people around the country, including myself, have taken a much more critical look at the way the war in Iraq has been handled. However, through all the hardships our soldiers face day-to-day on the streets of Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq, it still remains evident to me that our success in Iraq and the success of the current Iraq government, is critical to the security of our Nation, the stability of the Middle East, and the fight against terrorism worldwide.

Indeed, much has been lost in the debates around this country as to the significance of the greater Middle East stability when looking at the situation in Iraq. Our country has maintained a presence in that region of the world since World War II, and it should not be a surprise to anyone that many countries there depend and rely on our presence there, both economically and for their own national security. After reviewing the recent transcript of Dr. Henry Kissinger before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I agreed with many of Dr. Kissinger's views on the current situation in Iraq as it relates to the Middle East as a whole, and the severe consequences the international community will face should we fail in Iraq.

Dr. Kissinger stressed diplomacy, something I have long advocated in this conflict and frankly for any conflict. I don't believe there is one Member of Congress who takes the decision lightly to send out troops into combat unless we all firmly believe it is a last option. I know I certainly didn't, and I know that an overwhelming majority of both Senators and Congressmen believed that as well when we authorized the use of force in Iraq back in 2002.

However, Dr. Kissinger also stressed that under the present conditions in Iraq, withdrawal is not an option for American forces. Such a withdrawal would have long reaching consequences on the war on terror worldwide, could lead to widespread genocide in Iraq and possible neighboring countries, as well as severe economic consequences for all Middle Eastern countries. It is clear that such a circumstance would mandate international forces be sent back into Iraq, but the costs at that point would be grave.

While most agree that the current situation in Iraq must be dealt with politically and economically, our military involvement is critical to providing the Iraqis the stability they need to let their new democracy take root. If we pull our troops out of Iraq now, or deny them much needed reinforcements as some would like to do, we risk losing Baghdad and possibly the entire country to full blown civil war. Under those circumstances, the government of Iraq would fall, and Iran and Syria would strengthen their grip on the Middle East, endangering the national security of America and our allies worldwide.

It is my hope that diplomatic efforts will continue in a more aggressive fashion to bring the international community to the realization of a failed State in Iraq, and the real consequences that we all face should our efforts fall short of stabilizing Baghdad and the country as a whole. Because the consequences are so high, I do not believe that our soldiers' withdrawal from Iraq should be placed on any timetable, and we need to reassure our soldiers and commanders in Iraq that we will continue to support their efforts. After all, they are operating in Iraq, but the work they are doing will have a far reaching effect to stabilize the Middle East.

Over the past few weeks, there have been many who have been outspoken about their disapproval of the President's new plan for Iraq. Not being an expert in military tactics, I do not believe it is my role as a U.S. Senator to play general for our soldiers as some are. Instead, I believe it is my duty in Congress to provide our soldiers with the resources and funding they require to do their job with the best equipment possible, while also pledging my unending moral support for the work they do each and every day to keep Americans safe both at home and abroad.

Every 4 years the citizens of America go to the polls to elect a commander in chief, who is responsible to the American people to lead our military in times of peace and times of war. It is no mistake that the founding fathers gave the power to declare war to the Congress, but the power to lead the military to the President. Our soldiers should not have to follow 535 Congressional ''generals'' who hold up critical funding while they second-guess tactical decisions of the commander in chief and military leaders.

Over the last few weeks a lot has been made of the troop reinforcement President Bush outlined to the American people. Prior to his speech, I and several other Members of Congress met with the President to discuss the current situation in Iraq. I made it very clear that Idahoans and I cannot continue to support the status quo; and he agreed. President Bush has spent the last many months working with his national security advisers, commanding officers in Iraq, Members of Congress and experts in the field of military issues in order to revise our national strategy with regards to Iraq and come up with a new strategy for victory.

Make no mistake, the onus is now on the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government to act, and I was extremely pleased to hear President Bush reiterate that fact. The efforts of our soldiers have given the Iraqi people a great opportunity to live in a free and stable country, but they must stand up and accept that responsibility.

My home State of Idaho has shared some of the burden of this war in Iraq. The 116th Brigade Combat Team served courageously for twelve months in Kirkuk and surrounding areas, and they have since returned home to their families. I had the opportunity to visit them in Iraq and was extremely proud of the feedback on these soldiers I received from Iraqi government officials, civilians, and U.S. military leaders. I would also like to spotlight all Idahoans who are serving in the Armed Forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. I am eternally grateful for their service and I will continue to provide them with all the support I can give.

It is my hope that Members of Congress will not pursue antiwar politics to the detriment of our soldiers in the field. Our soldiers have been fighting courageously in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere around the world to protect each and every American life, and I believe it is incumbent for the Congress to stand behind them. Numerous bills and resolutions have been proposed in the Senate to disapprove of their mission, cap troop levels, withhold funding for the reinforcements, or even completely de-fund the troops serving in Iraq. I cannot and will not support any legislation that I see as unproductive to our current efforts in Iraq, because I believe it places our forces in greater danger and could embolden our enemies to continue their attacks against innocent Iraqis, Americans and our allies.

In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee in January of this

year, General Hayden, the Director of the CIA, responded to a question regarding what would happen if we pulled out now from Iraq. Director Hayden responded, Three very quick areas:

> No. 1, more Iraqis die from the disorder inside Iraq. No. 2, Iraq becomes a safe haven, perhaps more dangerous than the one Al Qaeda had in Afghanistan. And finally, No. 3, the conflict in Iraq bleeds over into the neighborhood and threatens serious regional instability.

He went on to state that this directly and immediately threatens the United States homeland because it:

> provides Al Qaida that which they are attempting to seek in several locations right now, be it Somalia, the tribal area of Pakistan or Anbar province—a safe haven to rival that which they had in Afghanistan.

During his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, GEN David Petraeus supported President Bush's plan to increase troop levels in Baghdad and Anbar province. In response to questioning before that committee, General Petraeus made it clear he believes that the reinforcement of soldiers into Baghdad and Anbar in Iraq will bolster the Iraqis' ability to stabilize their government and defeat the insurgency, instead of allowing them to continue to buck that responsibility, as some have asserted.

Many in Congress have stated publicly that this is the last chance the United States has to get it right in Iraq. If that is the case, I feel there is no general better qualified to be in charge of our ground forces and get things turned around on the ground than General Petraeus. I recognize that the American people have grown weary over the last months since the violence has escalated in Iraq, but I remain optimistic that the Iraqi government, with the aid of our soldiers, can turn things around.

I had the pleasure of meeting General Petraeus during one of my two trips to Iraq and was very impressed by his knowledge of the situation and his expertise in counterinsurgency. I have no doubt that General Petraeus is the right man to lead our forces in Iraq and I believe that he will overcome the new challenges he now faces. Let us not send the right man and then tell him it is the wrong job.

In closing, while I share the concerns of many of my colleagues regarding the situation in Iraq, I will support the President's plan to provide the reinforcements necessary to provide stability in Baghdad and Anbar province. I am hopeful that this plan will give the Iraqi government the best chance to stand on their own two feet and make the positive strides necessary to take control of the security situation and function as a stable government. It is this Senator's personal opinion that resolutions condemning the President's new way forward send the wrong message to our soldiers, the Iraqi people, and especially our enemies.

I certainly appreciate and support the role of Congress to provide oversight with respect to U.S. military engagements. However, I do not believe we should cripple the Commander in Chief's ability to work with our military leadership to defeat our enemies, and passing a resolution condemning the President's new plan for Iraq would do precisely that. Instead, I support resolutions that call for the support of the American people and Congress to give the President's plan a chance to work. Mistakes have been made, unquestionably, and the violence in Baghdad and Anbar province has grown to a level that few predicted, but I am not yet ready to throw in the towel on this President's new plan and our soldiers' ability to assist in stabilizing Iraq before they even get a chance to try.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

PROCEDURAL TACTICS

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, thank you for the recognition. I have sought recognition to discuss the procedural situation which confronts the Senate at the present time and to discuss a proposed rule change which would deal with this kind of a problem.

We have pending a motion to proceed on S. 470, which proposes a disagreement with the President's plan to send 21,500 additional troops to Iraq. Under the Senate rules, a motion to proceed is debatable, and when we deal with an issue of the magnitude of what is happening in Iraq today and the President's proposal to send additional troops, it is obviously a matter of great moment. The eyes and ears of the country are focused on the Senate. The eyes and ears of the world are focused on the Senate.

So far, what is happening is largely misunderstood, but the starting point is that a motion to proceed is debatable. But before debate even began, the majority leader filed a motion for cloture, which means to cut off debate. Now, a cloture motion would be in order, but why before the debate has even started? The cloture motion is designed to cut off debate after debate has gone on too long. But what lies behind the current procedural status is an effort by the majority leader to do what is called filling the tree, which is a largely misunderstood concept, not understood at all by the public generally and even not understood fully by many Members of this body. But the Senate is unique from the House, and the Senate has been billed as the world's greatest deliberative body, because Senators have the right to offer amendments.

In the House of Representatives they established what is called a rule, and they preclude Members from offering amendments unless it satisfies the Rules Committee. In the Senate, generally a Senator doesn't have to satisfy anybody except his or her own conscience in offering an amendment. But if the majority leader, who has the right of recognition—and that, of course, is not understood either—but if the majority leader is on the floor and seeks recognition, he gets it ahead of everybody else. And if the majority leader offers what is called a first-degree amendment to the bill, which is substantively identical to the bill but only a technical change, and then again seeks recognition and gets it and offers a second-degree amendment to the bill, which is substantively the same but only a technical change, then no other Senator may offer any additional amendment. That is a practice which has been engaged in consistently by both parties for decades, undercutting the basic approach of the Senate, which enables Senators to offer amendments and get votes.

The Congressional Research Service has tabulated the statistics going back to the 99th Congress in 1985 and 1986 when Senator Dole used this procedure on five occasions. In the 100th Congress, Senator BYRD, then the majority leader, used this procedure on three occasions. In the 103d Congress, the next majority leader, Senator Mitchell, used this procedure on nine occasions. When Senator Dole became leader again in the 104th Congress, he used this procedure on five occasions. In the 106th Congress, Senator LOTT, then the majority leader, used it nine times. In the 107th Congress, Senator Daschle, then the majority leader, used it once. He was only majority leader for about 18 months. In the 108th Congress, Senator Frist used it three times, and in the 109th Congress five times.

Now, my suggestion is that the parties ought to declare a truce on this procedural war of filling the tree which undercuts the basic thrust of Senate procedure to allow Senators to offer amendments. But the majority leaders continue to use it, which they have a right to under the current rules, which is why I am suggesting a change in the rules. But it will take a little time to change the rules. We can't do it immediately for the Iraq debate. But it would be my hope that there would be a public understanding of what we are doing, because the most effective process in our governmental operations is public understanding and public pressure. We call it a political question. We call it public understanding to have transparency or an understanding of what we do, and then the public can say yea or nay with what is happening, and that is a tremendous force to lead Senators and Members of the House of Representatives to take action, to call it the right thing, or to take action consistent with sound public policy.

Now, what is happening today is that charges are being leveled on all sides. There has been a lot of finger-pointing with most of the Democrats saying the Republicans are obstructing a vote—a debate and a vote on the Iraqi resolutions. And Republicans are saying: Well, we are insisting on our right to debate the motion to proceed. We don't think you should file cloture before the