Well, we find that right now home State training of National Guard units should have to be suspended because of the supplemental not being funded, and deployment of all military units is going to have to be slowed.

In other words, there are people who are part of our Armed Forces who have been in Iraq, who have served their time, who are expecting to come home. Their time of coming home is going to be delayed because their replacement will not have the resources to get back into the fight.

The administration’s position on the bill is that the war supplemental should remain focused on the needs of the troops and not be used for a vehicle for adding on emergency spending, and also for policy proposals that I find are more destined to make a difference in the political fight than they are in the fight against the enemies of our country.

Mr. President, I conclude by reading a letter that was written by Army LTC Charles P. Ferry, regarding the death of his comrade, his fellow soldier, Army Sgt. Joshua Hager, a young man who died in the service of his country.

The lieutenant colonel wrote:

On February 22, 2007, the Scout Platoon I was conducting a vehicle movement at night along a route we had traveled many times before. Joshua and the rest of the Scouts had every inch of this road memorized. About halfway to our destination, Joshua’s vehicle was struck by a large, deep-buried improvised explosive device (IED). Joshua was instantly killed by the blast and the two other Scouts in the vehicle were wounded.

The lieutenant colonel continues to write:

I have been in the Army for about 23 years and served in numerous Infantry, Special Forces, and Ranger Battalions. I have served about three years collectively in combat in Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and Staff Sergeant Hager is one of the finest Sergeants I have ever served with and I trusted my life with him. He was the consummate professional and the quintessential standard bearer for his platoon. He died doing what he loved and what he was very good at and I was proud to serve with him.

Young Joshua Hager told his dad that my son won these things and added:

I do believe it is very important that we continue to fund the troops, that we give the troops our support and our backing, and we do so in a timely manner.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER pro tempore, The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. LINCOLN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OBAMA). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I know the Republican side has additional time remaining. That will be reserved for them. I wish to speak under the Democrats’ time.

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

TRAGEDY AT VIRGINIA TECH

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I would like to take a few moments to extend my heartfelt condolences to the Virginia Tech community and the families comforting them. The entire Nation obviously is grieving with them over their tremendous loss. We want them to know that all of our States, particularly the great State of Arkansas, stand with them as they cope with this senseless tragedy. We will continue to be with them, keep them in our thoughts and prayers in the coming weeks and months.

I attended Randolph-Macon Woman’s College just down the road from Blacksburg in Lynchburg, VA. I remember when I was in college, Virginia Tech was well known for its strong and passionate student body. They had tremendous strength. They had a strong will, a strong determination, and a strong and bright spirit. I certainly know that all of those strengths remain in today’s student body at Virginia Tech. I also know that their families will be there to comfort them and stand them well in the coming months. We hope they know we have them in our thoughts and prayers.

WAR IN IRAQ

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, news from the Pentagon last week hit so many families throughout our great State of Arkansas particularly hard. Four years into the conflict in Iraq, the Army National Guard put 13,000 reservists, including nearly 2,000 from the largest National Guard unit in Arkansas, the 39th Infantry Brigade, on notice that they should be prepared for a second deployment at the end of this year. The Pentagon’s decision to potentially deploy these troops marks the first time during Operation Iraqi Freedom that full Guard units would be called for a second tour of duty. Our Arkansas troops already have performed bravely in Iraq, and we know they will do so again.

Today, along with many Arkansans honorably serving in the Active-Duty military, over 1,600 of our citizen soldiers have been activated for service in the Middle East and along our southern border with Mexico. The 142nd Fire Brigade based in Fayetteville, AR, mobilized last week and is expected in Iraq this week. Earlier, the 213th Area Support Medical Company are preparing for their mobilization orders in June. Many of these members served in Iraq before with the 296th Ambulance Company. The headquarters company, the 871st Troop Command, is also expected to be mobilized in June.

Since the war began, our troops have performed their mission with incredible bravery and skill in some of the harshest conditions imaginable. They families have supported them and kept them in their prayers, have been there with them each step of the way, both in the harsh conditions and when they have returned. Their communities have supported them, many of which are rural communities. They are communities that, when these soldiers have been deployed, have to find someone else to fill positions while they are gone, positions such as mayor or principal of the school, fire chief or police chief, small businesses in the economies in those small rural communities thriving.

Because of the sacrifice of these brave men and women, their families, and these communities, we have seen a more early elected government replace a ruthless dictator.

We have seen a democratic constitution approved by the Iraqi people replace the authoritarian rule they had known. Tragically, we also have seen American mismanagement of this war which is not reflective of the tremendous sacrifice put forth by our men and women in uniform. Today, more than
I am reminded of a conversation I had with my grandmother one time. She said to me: It is crazy, but it is important that all of your children love each other. Which of your children do you love the most? How do you respond to someone who asks you such a question? Which of your children do you love the most? How do you respond to someone who asks you such a question?
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, how much time remains to this side of the aisle under the order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Twelve and a half minutes.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to be able to come to the floor and urge the Senate to expedite the consideration of the supplemental appropriations bill that is now in conference between House and Senate members on the Appropriations Committee. This supplemental request for funding for our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan has been pending now for way too long, without action to send this bill to the President for his signature.

Over 2 weeks ago, I received a letter from the Joint Chiefs of Staff outlining the urgency of this appropriations bill. I am going to read a couple of excerpts from that letter now:

With the increased pace of operations and material needs in Iraq and Afghanistan, we ask that the Congress expeditiously complete its work on the Fiscal Year 2007 Emergency Supplemental. The supplemental funding is critical to military readiness and force generation as we prosecute the war on terror. Given the current status of this legislation, we are particularly concerned that funding could be significantly delayed.

It is very clear that delay is occurring, and it is a serious matter. We are talking about life-and-death situations, the ability to furnish the equipment, the weaponry, the training that is necessary for our Armed Forces to carry out their mission.

This is not a time to play politics with the well-being of troops in the field. I am afraid that what we are witnessing. I do not have any particular problem with the Senate and House members of our conference committee seriously engaging in a discussion of our differences and resolving those and submitting a final conference report as soon as possible. I do not care that is what we do. But we are seeing more and more delay. That is just not justified under the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

In this letter, I received the other day, here is another thing that is pointed out by the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Without approval of the supplemental funds in April, the Armed Services will be forced to take involuntary and disruptive measures in order to sustain combat operations. The impacts on readiness and quality of life could be profound. We will have to implement spending restrictions and reprogram billions of dollars. Reprogramming is a short-term, cost-inefficient solution that wastes our limited resources. Spending restrictions will impact our follow-on forces as they prepare for war, possibly compromising future readiness and strategic agility. Furthermore, these restrictions increase the military burden on our forces and their families during this time of war.

I do not know how the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and those who are working closely with him in this very difficult period could be more clear about the importance of action now on this supplemental appropriations bill.

I am not going to belabor the point, but the time for us to continue to engage in who is going to win this political struggle about deadlines, forced redeployments from Iraq and Afghanistan, suspension of activities of this kind or the other, and who is in charge, is over. With the world watching and our Nation is competent to deal with an emergency that threatens the very security of our country.

I know when I came to Congress, you would hear it said that partisan politics should stop at the water's edge, that whatever is going on in other parts of the world that affects our security, our economic well-being, threatens us all as a nation, Democrats, Republicans, young and old, the military, and the civilian leaders of our country— we are all in this together.

We need to work out our differences and resolve them somehow. Let's look to compromise that is fair, that carries out the intent as expressed in these bills by those who have supported and will continue to support the military and the American family whole. They not only deserve our appreciation and support, but I also very disappointed that the President continues to put veto threats out there about a bill that is so vitally necessary to our soldiers and to our entire America.

Mrs. Pelosi yesterday. I see that as a sign of progress. But I am also very disappointed that the President continues to put veto threats out there about a bill that is so vitally necessary to our soldiers and to our entire America.

For the security of our country and for the sake of our troops, it is time for a new direction. It must be a direction that better reflects the ability, the reality as possible progress that ultimately lies with the Iraqis taking responsibility for their own future. We know—we know—it can happen if the Iraqis understand what is expected of them.

This new direction must also acknowledge we must do more for our soldiers when they are in harm's way particularly but also when they come home. The love and care—particularly health care—they and their families need to be essential to keeping our American family whole. They not only deserve our appreciation and support, they deserve the very best equipment, armor, and other battlefield amenities necessary to complete their mission and to bring them home, as well as the proper care, benefits, and attention once their military service is complete.

Our troops are worthy of this commitment from us. We should come together as a Congress and an executive branch to make that expression, to show our troops and to show our entire American family that at this time, at this difficult time in our Nation's history, we come together in a bipartisan way, in an American way, to recognize the needs of this great country and to move, up the agenda.

I strongly believe this bill offers the necessary guidelines to bring our soldiers home safely, and as soon as possible, to care for this incredible country—these communities they will return home to, to keep them whole and to keep this incredible fabric of our American family strong.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.