Iraq has to make the hard decisions about who benefits from that trade. Thank you, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore, The Senator from Washington is recognized.

IRAQ SUPPLEMENTAL

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I am here to speak on the floor today because American lives, American security, and America's future are on the line in Iraq. The American people know it. They listen to our message fast. November. The Iraq Study Group has told us. They gave us honest assessments and recommendations to move forward in Iraq.

Generals have spoken out. General Casey told us in January:

The longer we in the U.S. Forces continue to bear the main burden of Iraq's security, it lengthens the time that the government of Iraq has to make the hard decisions about reconquering the territory with the militias.

General Abizaid told us in November:

I do not believe that more American troops right now is the solution to the problem.

Colin Powell has talked about it. He said:

I am not persuaded that another surge of troops into Baghdad for the purpose of suppressing this communist violence, this civil war, will work.

The numbers speak for themselves. More than 3,300 Americans have died in Iraq and nearly 25,000 have been wounded. And since February 12, 9 more U.S. soldiers were killed in a bombing, and 20 more U.S. troops and an Iraqi soldier were injured.

Americans have heard the military experts, they have heard the Iraq Study Group, they have seen the sacrifice of our troops and their families, and now they are demanding a change in course. But, sadly, the President refuses to listen. He is ignoring the military experts, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, and the American people.

It is clear the Iraq civil war requires a political solution, not a military solution. Our servicemembers have done everything we have asked them to do. They deserve better than to be stuck in the middle of a civil war.

Four years into this war—starting the fifth year—the President is still passing around heated rhetoric while trying to convince the American people that our troops are getting the support they need. I reject that rhetoric, and I call on him to put politics aside and begin to protect our troops first. We can all agree, it is long past time for that.

Now is the time to show our troops we respect our military, and we refuse to decimate the world’s finest fighting forces through extended deployments, limited time at home, and the destruction of valuable equipment in another country’s civil war.

Now is the time to show our troops their lives mean more than an open-ended commitment to an Iraqi Government that has repeatedly failed to meet deadlines and take ownership for their own future.

Now is the time to show our troops we understand that America needs them, not in the middle of an Iraqi civil war but in places such as Afghanistan, where al-Qaeda is growing in strength.

And now is the time to show our troops their Government is about more than promises and rhetoric. We must stand together to say we will meet the needs of our injured servicemembers and our veterans who have paid the price for this administration’s failure to plan for the war and its aftermath.

Congress is moving forward now to pass a supplemental bill that shows our troops they come first. All the President has to do is sign on the dotted line. Unfortunately, because the Bush administration failed to plan and failed to understand the centuries’ old tensions in this region, we now, more than ever, need a political and diplomatic solution in Iraq.

As the past 2 months have brutally revealed, the escalation is not working. The civil war has intensified and our troops are stuck in the middle of sectarian violence and find themselves the target of insurgent attacks. It is hard to argue that the situation on the ground—both for our troops and for Iraqis—has gotten better.

Last Wednesday, the New York Times reported:

Bombs ripped through the streets of Baghdad killing at least 171 people in the deadliest day in the capital since the American-led security plan for the city took effect two months ago. The Associated Press noted:

Two days ago, the Boston Globe noted:

The deaths raised to 85 the number of U.S. servicemembers who died in Iraq in April, making it the deadliest month for American troops since the war began.

According to the Associated Press:

Outside the capital, 1,504 civilians were killed between Feb. 14 and Thursday, April 12 compared with 1,009 deaths during the two previous months.

It is time to transition our mission in Iraq from that of policing a civil war to a political solution. Our troops are trained for combat, not for refereeing war functions with a long and complex legacy. It is time to focus on strengthening America’s security and bringing our troops home.

Transitioning the mission should center on three realistic and achievable goals for our military: Training and equipping Iraqi security forces, conducting targeted counterterrorism, and protecting our remaining U.S. forces and interests in Iraq.

The second part of the equation is a surge in diplomatic and political efforts. This is a necessary task the President has refused to undertake. America alone does not own the keys to Iraq’s future. Iraq’s neighbors must help as well. They should play a larger role in training the Iraqi military and police and in reconstruction. They should play a larger role in convincing Iraqis they must make compromises and take responsibility for their future. Without a targeted and serious regional effort to stabilize Iraq, the country’s future will remain in question.

The cause of continued insecurity and destruction has not been our military, but, rather, the political and policy failures of a President who has hidden, distorted, and stubbornly refused to pursue a strategy needed to bring stability to Iraq.

As we all saw vividly in November, the American people have lost patience with the President’s go-it-alone strategy. It is simply wrongheaded to continue on with an open-ended commitment to an Iraqi Government that has repeatedly failed to meet deadlines and to take responsibility for their own country.

The supplemental bill we will send to the White House requires the President to send a report to Congress by July 1 of this year certifying whether Iraq is meeting responsible benchmarks. The American people deserve to know if the sacrifices made by our troops are being met by the Iraqi Government.

Specifically, the American people deserve to know if the Iraqi Government has given U.S. and Iraqi security forces the authority to pursue all extremists, including the Sunni insurgents and the Shia militias.

The American people deserve to know if Iraq is making substantial progress in delivering necessary Iraqi security forces for Baghdad and protecting those forces from political interference.

We deserve to know if Iraq is intensifying efforts to build balanced security forces throughout Iraq that provide even-handed security for all Iraqis.

Specifically, we deserve to know if the Iraqi Government is making substantial progress in meeting reconciliation initiatives, including enacting laws to equitably share oil revenue
among all Iraqi regions, whether they are adopting laws for provincial and local elections, whether they are re-forming their laws banning members of the Baath party from public service, and whether they are shouldering the cost of reconstruction through allocation tolls.

Those are reasonable benchmarks Americans should require of Iraq if we are asking our young Americans to put their lives on the line. That is why Congress should send this supplemental request to the White House with language that begins the phased redeployment of our troops no later than October 1 of this year, with a goal of removing all combat forces by April 1, 2008—with the exception of those who will remain to train and equip Iraqi security forces, to continue targeting counterterrorist operations, and to protect our remaining U.S. forces.

From sending our troops to war without critical armor, to housing them in tents, to leaving them to fend for themselves when they need mental health care, the Bush administration has utterly failed our servicemembers, our veterans, and their families.

As we rightfully change the mission of our troops in Iraq and prepare to redeploy, we cannot—and we must not—forget about our veterans when they come home. Nor is it failure more apparent than in the handling of what some now know as the signature wound of this war: traumatic brain injury. It is now estimated that 10 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have suffered traumatic brain injury during their service in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the biggest problems with traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is that it is an unseen wound. Often, because of that, it is misdiagnosed. In too many cases today, unless a servicemember is involved in an IED explosion, if he fails to acknowledge that having been involved in that explosion, if he was 100 yards away or 200 yards away. So as a result, the actual number of OIF and OEF veterans with TBI could be even much higher than the statistics today even indicate.

Now, I know many of us are familiar with the ABC News anchor Bob Woodruff’s experience with traumatic brain injury. I personally was moved by Bob’s struggle for his injury. His family had unrelenting hope for his recovery, and their ongoing work toward triumph was so apparent throughout this horrible situation. Bob Woodruff has seen a tremendous recovery from his horrendous injury, but I fear the care he received has not been duplicated today for thousands of other troops with similar injuries when they have returned home.

He detailed for us several cases of soldiers who were suffering from injuries, and in several cases of care they received when they left flagships care centers for our smaller, local hospitals.

Our wounded warriors and our veterans have faced massive budget shortfalls. They have faced horribly long waiting lines and sickening hospital conditions. But this administration continues to be reactive to this problem to this day. It is time for that posture toward our troops, taking care of our veterans, taking care of their families has to be a part of the cost of this war.

When it comes to caring for our troops and veterans, this administration—from the White House, to the Pentagon, to the Department of Veterans Affairs—has consistently waited until conditions reached a critical stage before taking action to remedy them.

In this supplemental conference report we are sending to the President, Congress is saying: Enough is enough. We are finally providing more funding for our troops than even the President himself has sought. The bill we are sending includes $29 billion for the Department of Defense, which I should note is nearly $4 billion more than the President’s request for our troops. We provide critical funding for vehicles that will help our troops be protected from IEDs.

This military has also been brought to the brink by a President who has, time and again, extended their tours and called upon our National Guard and Reserve to meet the needs of the moment. This supplemental conference report will re-build our overburdened military and calls for an end to the deployment of nonbattle-ready troops. It provides $1.8 billion for the VA to provide first class health care to our wounded and $2.5 billion for military health care.

For the last 4 years, this administration has conducted this war with little regard for the tremendous strains it is placing on the VA, on our veterans, and their families. Today, we are putting an end to that neglect. The days of ignoring our wounded warriors as a cost of this war are over.

As the President acknowledged in a speech last September, our terrorist enemies are more dangerous than ever. On that point, the President is correct. Unfortunately, he fails to acknowledge that terrorists are rapidly growing and gathering strength outside of Iraq, and he fails to acknowledge that having our forces in the middle of a civil war strengthens them. The President is ignoring the will of military experts, the American people. He is going to have to explain why he is ignoring the needs of our troops over- seas, why he is blocking funding to care for our injured troops, why he is ignoring the will of military experts, the American people. He is going to have to explain why he is ignoring the needs of our hard-hit communities that are struggling to recover and why he is standing in the way of security needs at home that are so critical.

Congress has agreed to a supplemental bill that shows our troops they come first. The President has repeatedly reminded Congress that he is the Commander in Chief and he is the one who has the authority to make the military and policy decisions that impact not only our troops and veterans but the well-being of our Gulf Coast, our borders, and the future of America’s security. The President is alone in his bunker. If he truly cares about getting this funding to our troops as soon as possible and providing them with the supplies and the health care and direction they deserve, he will quickly sign this bipartisan supplemental bill.

Mr. President, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is just a short distance from Capitol Hill, but if the President vetoes this sensible legislation to give our troops a successful path forward in
Iraq, then he is miles away from the will of the American people whom he serves.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized. Only 1 minute remains on the Democratic side.

IRAQ SUPPLEMENTAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I strongly oppose President Bush’s statements that the Democratic leaders are trying to use the current emergency supplemental bill to make a political statement. Congress is acting on its mandate from the American people, who used their votes last November to register their opposition to the war in Iraq.

The President has repeatedly made it clear that nothing—not the wishes of the American people, not the advice of military foreign policy experts, not the concerns of members of both parties—will discourage him from pursuing a war that has no end in sight and that has no military solution. With herculean efforts stuck in an Iraqi civil war, Congress is waiting for the President to change course. We must change the course ourselves.

Once again, President Bush is stalling for time as he threatens to veto a bipartisan bill that could finally change Iraq for our purposes. He has delayed. He has delayed immigration for time as he threatens to veto a weaker bill to the President’s desk and I will continue to speak out on this issue until the voices of the American people are finally heard in Congress and the White House. Mr. GrahHam. Mr. President, we have 30 minutes; is that correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct, there is 30 minutes remaining.

Mr. GRAHAM. Would the Presiding Officer let me know when 10 minutes have passed?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator will be notified.

IRAQ WAR SUPPLEMENTAL

Mr. GRAHAM. The President will veto this measure. He should. It is one of the worst ideas ever come out of the Congress in the history of warfare that the United States has engaged in. It sets a date for withdrawal. I think it is October. It intrudes on the President’s Commander in Chief role. It is letting the enemy know exactly what they have to do in terms of date and time to win in Iraq. Everyone who dies waiting for the President to withdraw, what have they died for? What have they been injured for?

What I would like to point out is that we should talk about those who have lost their lives in Iraq wearing the uniform, and civilians included, who have been serving our country. But we shouldn’t use their deaths as a reason to withdraw from a war we can’t afford to lose—and we have not lost. We should be honoring their service and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice, because they are standing for our national security interests. Why do they serve? Why do they go to Iraq? Why do they keep reenlisting in the Iraqi theater and the Afghan theater at a higher rate than the military as a whole? What do they see about Iraq that people here in the Senate are blinded to? Why would they keep going back to a war they believe is lost? Why would they go three and four times? Why would they keep fighting beyond any other group in the military?

Because they know after having gone that if we win in Iraq, their children, their grandchildren, the Nation as a whole is more secure. And if we lose in Iraq, the war is not over, it just gets bigger, and the likelihood of their children being involved in a war in the Middle East goes up, not down. So that is why they go. That is why they are not withdrawing. That is why enlistments are up, not down, because they get it.

The Senate doesn’t get it. The Democratic leadership doesn’t get it at all. Blinded by a dislike of this President, we can’t see clearly what is going on in Iraq. Whether we should have gone or not is over; we are there. There are other people who are there who would like to win this war. Al-Qaida is there in large numbers, trying to kill this infant democracy, because they know if a democracy can flourish in Iraq, their agenda has taken a mighty blow.

How are they trying to drive us out? By killing civilians and coalition forces in as large a number as they can make it.

So is it going to be the foreign policy of the United States when it comes to fighting terrorism that if they can kill enough of us—whatever that magic number is—we leave? You win? Do you think for one moment declaring Iraq war is the same as sending us a humanitarian mission in Iraq, but there are plenty of people of the Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish persuasions that want the same thing for Iraq that we want. There are Shia extremists who want to align with Iran. There are Sunni extremists who want to come back in power and have the good old days of Saddam. They are in the minority. There is not open civil war in this country. There are extremist groups representing the Sunni and the Shia sects that are trying to change Iraq for their purposes, bend Iraq to their will, against the majority of Iraqis, and in the middle of these sects is al-Qaida. In the middle of these sects is Iran. We are not playing so hard in Iraq.

The biggest nightmare to this Iranian theocracy would be a democracy on their border, where different groups would live together, where a woman would live together, where a woman could vote for her leader, where people could vote for their leaders, not be dictated to from on high. That is why they are playing in Iraq. That is why al-Qaida is there.

The question is, Why do we want to leave? It is tough to watch young people being killed at home in this war, but we didn’t start this war. War is inevitably about young people getting hurt and getting killed. That is why our world—after so many thousands of years, it seems as if mankind would have learned that war is not the way, but we have not learned that lesson as mankind. The people who attacked us on September 11, 2001, there will never be a surrender document negotiated with them.

Right now we are about replacing a dictator who was trying to make a joke of U.N. inspections, trying to make the world and his neighbors believe that he was acquiring weapons of mass destruction.