

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that time, plus the additional time granted to the Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the Chair.

#### IRAQ

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, the American people have demanded a new direction in Iraq, and the momentum building toward that change is strong. It is not difficult to understand why. More than 3,600 brave American troops have lost their lives. Tens of thousands have returned home gravely injured—gravely injured. The war now costs Americans \$10 billion every month in Iraq, with total spending now exceeding that of the Vietnam war. It has ruined our international standing.

Despite all this, little has changed on the ground. Violence has worsened. Sectarian fighting goes on virtually unabated, with deadly attacks taking a severe and relentless toll. While courageous Americans die, Iraqi politicians argue and stall.

Leaving U.S. troops caught in the morass of Iraq has not made that country more secure and, more important, it does not make our country more secure. To stay President Bush's course will continue to cost our men and women in uniform their lives and their physical and mental health. It will continue to drain our national Treasury and further erode what little good will remains for America around the world. It will leave our military with overstrained troops, overstressed families, and equipment and resources in disrepair. We are breaking our military in Iraq.

It is time for a change. The American people know this. Democrats and, to their credit, many Republicans in this Congress know this. Anyone who is listening or looking with clear eyes knows this. Yet after years of misjudgments, years of misleading slogans, years of misplaced priorities, and years of failure, this President still refuses to do what he must do: Change course in Iraq and bring our courageous American troops home.

Just the other day, the President reasserted his intention to stay the course, to continue this war indefinitely, an open-ended commitment, a blank check, with no prospects for redeployment or a new direction. Again, President Bush has failed to listen to the millions of Americans who have called on him and who have called on us to bring the war to an end. Enough is enough. It is time for a change.

Mr. President, a Member of this body recently said this about our Nation's course in Iraq:

In my judgment, the costs and risks of continuing down the current path outweigh the potential benefits that might be achieved. Persisting indefinitely with the surge strategy will delay policy adjustments that have a better chance of protecting our vital interests over the long-term.

I happen to agree with those words spoken by the very distinguished Senator, RICHARD LUGAR of Indiana, but what I like the most about them is the voice of reason and thoughtfulness they impart to this debate. There has been too little of that to date. The questions we face over this war in Iraq are serious questions, and they demand seriousness and reason from those who would grapple with them. Senator LUGAR's statement reflects that thoughtfulness, reflects that reason, in the midst of a debate which has all too often been characterized by a lack of those characteristics.

Look at this administration, which too often communicates not with reason but with slogans and sound bites: "Stay the course." "Global war on terror." "Cut and run." "Precipitous withdrawal." People watching this continuing debate, mark when you hear the phrase "precipitous withdrawal." You are hearing the end of reason, and sloganizing. This is no service to the people of our country, not when serious and difficult problems must be solved. Just look where this slogan leadership has gotten us so far. It is a dishonor roll of failure: weapons of mass destruction, nonexistent; occupation planning, incompetence; reconstruction efforts, failed; the strain on our troops and their families, disabling; the treatment of our wounded troops, disgraceful; expenditures, massive; fraud, run rampant; the confidence of the American people, forfeited after cascades of false optimism and phony good news.

It is time, as Senator LUGAR's words exemplify, to pursue intelligent, thoughtful, and realistic decisions about our course in Iraq, decisions that will protect our national interest. It is time to put the slogans away and thoughtfully extricate ourselves from a disastrous mess.

I hope we can take these steps forward in the Senate together. I am encouraged that several Republican friends have stated clearly that they cannot support the President's failed course in Iraq and are seeking real change.

As I have said many times in this Chamber, our strategy to effect change in Iraq requires the rapid and responsible redeployment of our troops. As I told the President directly when I met with him several months ago, I see the prospect of U.S. redeployment as the most powerful force at our disposal in this conflict now. That prospect of redeployment of American troops will eliminate the insurgents' argument that America is an occupying army, taking away from them a powerful recruiting tool for militant extremists. It will spur Iraq's political leaders to step forward, to quit slow-walking us through their own civil war and take responsibility for the security and governance of their own country. It will confront neighboring nations with a real impetus to assume more positive roles in assuring the region's stability.

It will help restore the faith of the world in the leadership, the integrity, the good judgment, and the good will of our great country.

The President's surge plan is not the new direction Americans are calling for. It is a tactic—a tactic that can only be effective as part of a larger coherent strategy. And strategy, in turn, largely depends on whether the overarching dynamic works in America's favor. In this regard, America is presently on the worst possible footing.

A redeployment of our troops creates the potential to change this overarching dynamic for the better, freeing us to focus on more effective strategies to counter al-Qaeda and to stabilize the region. Iraqi leaders will have to reach compromises with each other because their vision for their country's future will no longer be drawn with a major U.S. military presence in it. In the time it will take to bring our massive deployment of troops home, we can send a clear signal to Iraqi leaders and to Iraq's neighbors that America is standing down and it is time for them to stand up. We can help them do that.

This is a critical step, and thoughtful, reasoned, political, and diplomatic leadership will be essential to take advantage of the new dynamic a redeployment offers. I will confess that I am deeply troubled that this administration may not have the credibility it needs to accomplish this difficult task, even if it were of a mind to try.

This Congress can help set favorable conditions for executive action. We cannot legislate diligence, we cannot legislate thoughtfulness, we cannot legislate competence, and it is not clear that this administration is viewed as capable of those qualities any longer. It may take new faces and new voices to represent our country credibly in this process. Fortunately, there are many talented and accomplished people in this country whose perspectives and experience can help build America's credibility and prestige around the world. It will be a significant diplomatic challenge, but it presents a significant—perhaps historic—diplomatic opportunity.

That executive responsibility—the need to put ourselves in that diplomatic arena—does not relieve us in the Senate of our duty to continue to press forcefully on behalf of the millions of Americans who demanded a change in Iraq, to apply reason, thought, and our best care and judgment to a problem that has not yielded to sloganizing. We will keep the pressure on this President and his administration, whose inability to admit failure is leading our precious Nation deeper and deeper into disaster in Iraq.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, first, what a remarkable ally the junior Senator from Rhode Island has been these few months he has been in the Senate. For his eloquence and help on many

issues—particularly this issue—I thank him. I greatly enjoyed listening to his remarks.

It has been 52 months since military operations began in Iraq. We have now been engaged in the Iraq war longer than we were in World War II. Approximately 3,600 Americans have died and 25,000 have been wounded. More than 4 million Iraqis have fled their homes, and tens of thousands, at a minimum, have been killed. With President Bush's surge well underway, violence in Iraq has exploded to unprecedented levels and American troop fatalities are up 70 percent. In short, from all sides, the situation in Iraq is an unmitigated disaster.

As if that weren't bad enough, our national security continues to suffer as the administration's single-minded focus on Iraq prevents us from adequately confronting threats of extremism and terrorism around the globe. Indeed, violence and instability continue to fester elsewhere at a great cost to our national security.

Last November, when the American people cast their ballots, they expressed their opposition to this war loudly and clearly. As the situation continues to deteriorate, they have raised their voices still louder. I know my colleagues hear their voices, as more and more of them step forward to call for a long overdue change of course.

At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, those voices continue to fall on deaf ears. Time and again, the President has 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 misguided war that has no end in sight.

Congress cannot wait for this President to change course in Iraq because you and I know he has no intention of doing so. He has made it clear that he will continue to pursue massive military engagement despite the wishes of the American people, despite the fact that our military is stretched to the breaking point, and despite the fact that our presence in Iraq has been, according to our own State Department, “used as a rallying cry for radicalization and extremist activity in neighboring countries.”

So it is up to us in Congress to listen to the American people, to save American lives, and to ensure our Nation's security by redeploying our troops from Iraq. We have the power and we have the responsibility to act, and to act now. That is why I will support the amendment offered by Senators LEVIN and JACK REED. By passing binding deadlines for both beginning and ending redeployment, the Senate can take a strong step toward bringing our involvement in this war to a close.

I especially applaud Senators HAGEL, SMITH, and SNOWE for putting principle ahead of party by cosponsoring this amendment. I hope their example in-

spires still more Senators to realize that it is not enough to just criticize the war or just call on the President to change course and that we don't need to—in fact, we cannot afford to—wait for more reports and more time before taking decisive action.

The Levin-Reed amendment doesn't go as far as I would like. I am concerned that the exception in the amendment, particularly for “providing logistical support” to Iraqi troops, would give the administration too much wiggle room to “repackage” its military mission instead of redeploying our brave servicemembers. Nonetheless, I am pleased to see so many colleagues—on both sides of the aisle—recognizing, at last, that the President's course in Iraq has failed, that Congress needs to act, and that we can and must safely redeploy our troops.

Other amendments that have been proposed fall short because they don't require the troops to be redeployed. It is not enough to pass something that sounds good but doesn't move us toward ending the war. Weak, feel-good amendments may give people political comfort, but that won't last long. We can fool ourselves, but we can't fool the American people.

Mr. President, it is increasingly clear that the war in Iraq has become the defining aspect of our engagement in this part of the world and that it, coupled with this administration's inconsistent efforts to promote democracy and the rule of law, has unfortunately alienated and angered those whose support and cooperation we need if we are to prevail against al-Qaida and its allies.

Our role in the war in Iraq has generated a level of political turbulence throughout the region and beyond. It has given way to a new variety of al-Qaida-style militants. These militants are gaining prominence in many countries that have traditionally been our allies. The longer we remain in Iraq, the longer these new strains of extremism will threaten the security of the region and, in turn, threaten our Nation. As long as the President's policies continue, Iraq will continue to be what the declassified National Intelligence Estimate calls a “cause celebre” for a new generation of terrorists.

Al-Qaida and its affiliates are not a one-country franchise. Yet this administration continues to pretend otherwise, such as calling Iraq the central front in the war on terror. Al-Qaida's networks have not relinquished their global fight to focus exclusively on Iraq. By deploying our troops from Iraq, we can focus on developing a comprehensive global strategy to combat them around the globe.

As I said, the administration's policies in Iraq are an unmitigated disaster. But there is a way to mitigate that disaster, to lessen the burdens it is imposing on our troops, our national security, our taxpayers, and our country. And that is to redeploy our troops from Iraq.

There is no reason to delay this decision until September. We know now what we will know then, and we know it isn't pretty. We have already read in the Pentagon's first quarterly surge report that violence has increased throughout much of the country in recent months, and we know there is no military solution to Iraq's problems. The only question is how long we are prepared to wait and how many Americans we are willing to have killed before we act.

As my colleagues know, the majority leader and I have introduced legislation that would safely redeploy our troops by setting a date, after which our funding for the war would be ended. That is what Congress did in 1993 with respect to our military mission in Somalia. I continue to believe we must be prepared to take that step again to finally put an end to the war in Iraq.

However, if the Levin-Reed amendment wins the support of a majority of the Senate, I believe that will be an important step forward, and I will likely not insist on a vote on the Feingold-Reid amendment at that time. If our efforts to end the war don't succeed, however, I will offer Feingold-Reid as an amendment to the Department of Defense appropriations bill when it is considered by the Senate. Of course, I hope that will not be necessary, but it will depend on whether enough of my colleagues are prepared to back up their words with action, to listen to the American people, and to say enough is enough.

This war doesn't make sense. It is hurting our country, and it is time to end it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator from Alabama may proceed in morning business.

#### IRAQ

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I have great respect for my colleague, Senator FEINGOLD. If I am not mistaken, he opposed the authorization of military force in Iraq and has consistently opposed that policy. I am not supportive of the Levin amendment. I think it would result in a precipitous, irresponsible, and dangerous redeployment of our soldiers, confusing to our allies, placing our soldiers who remain in Iraq at greater risk, and placing the Iraqi soldiers, many of whom, indeed, are standing with us right now to fight al-Qaida in Iraq, making their lives more dangerous. In fact, they are taking more casualties than we are. It is not correct to say they are not performing. We wish they would perform much better. We wish the Government was stronger. But, in fact, we are at this very moment shoulder to shoulder in operation after operation around Iraq.

I will note this. This is not a little, bitty nation we are leaders of. This is the United States of America, a great nation. Two months ago, the Congress