

Thank you all.

It's a great honor for my organization, Third Way, to co-host this event. Though we are only two and a half years old, we have been privileged to work with Majority Leader Reid and his outstanding team on a number of issues, many relating to national security in general and to the War in Iraq in particular. We have always admired his leadership, his vision and his toughness in standing up for what he believes in and what is right for America.

In fact, we believe that combination of traits, combined with this unique moment in history, have made Harry Reid the most important Senate leader in decades. He stood firmly against the conservative tide as Minority Leader, and he battled them to a standstill on most issues. Now, America is lucky to have a man with the wisdom, judgment and strength of Harry Reid serving as Majority Leader during this hour of reckoning for the United States.

Harry Reid doesn't seek out battles, but he doesn't shy from them either. Where he believes the best interests of the United States are on the line, he will fight hard to lead this country in the right direction.

And as we will hear in a moment, Senator Reid believes, as we do, that matters of enormous national importance are on the line right now – that America's future in Iraq is at a crossroads. We believe that continuing down the path that this country is on would be a tragic, potentially catastrophic mistake, compounding an already grievous set of errors on the part of the current administration.

We are eager to hear the Majority Leader's ideas on how the nation moves forward now; Third Way stands ready to help in this struggle in any way we can.

But before we hear from Senator Reid, it is my great honor to introduce the man who helms the Wilson Center, our co-host of this event.

As Lee Hamilton no doubt remembers as if it were yesterday, I was an intern in his office in the summer of 1985.

Of course, I was one of approximately 800 interns that served in his office during his 39-year tenure in Congress, so perhaps he doesn't remember. For that matter, he's had a great deal on his mind in the years since, given his service as Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Iran-Contra hearings, the 9-11 Commission, and the Iraq Study Group, and as a member of countless other commissions, panels and investigative bodies.

In short, Mr. Hamilton has helped guide this country through some of its most difficult passages, and there is basically no American leader who knows more about international relations in general and the Middle East in particular.

Moreover, for me, and for the scores of others who passed through his office, Mr. Hamilton made an indelible mark, with his own keen

intellect, deep knowledge, abounding cultural sensitivity, and extraordinary commitment to public service. Sir, I thank you for the inspiration you have provided me and your fellow Americans.

And I thank you for the honor of introducing you today. Ladies and gentleman, the Director of the Wilson Center, Lee Hamilton.