Let me thank my

colleague for yielding.

Let me say that I am disappointed

that we have reached this point here

today. Mr. Speaker, it didn’t have to

come to this.

Nearly 100 days ago, the President

initiated a strike against Libya without

consultation from the Congress and

without prior explanation to the American

people. Then, as now, we all supported

the removal of the regime of

Libya, a regime that was slaughtering

and is slaughtering its own people. Yet

rather than seek regime change from

the start, the President chose to follow,

not lead, and pursued a strictly

humanitarian mission under the banner

of the United Nations, with no plan

for Colonel Qadhafi’s removal.

So at the outset, we asked some very

straightforward questions for the

President: Why isn’t removing Qadhafi

a part of this mission? What if he

doesn’t leave? Who are the rebels that

we are there helping to fight? How long

is this going to last and at what cost?

And what does success look like? These

were questions that the administration

would not, or could not, answer.

Under our Constitution, the Commander

in Chief has the authority to

take actions necessary to protect our

national security. This is an authority

which I and this House respect, but it

does not free the President from accountability

to the American people,

to this Congress, or to the rule of law.

Now, whatever your opinion of the

War Powers resolution may be, the fact

is it is the law of the land and simply

cannot be ignored. So 3 weeks ago, this

House overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan

resolution asking the President

to explain how this mission is consistent

with our national security

goals, to justify continuing this operation

without authorization. He responded

by telling us he didn’t need

Congress because there are no ‘‘hostilities’’

taking place in Libya. Well,

we soon found out even his own lawyers

don’t buy that argument.

Now, if the Commander in Chief is

going to take our forces into war, he

must take ownership of it. And if the

President believes that missile strikes

and drone operations taking place in

Libya are critical, it is his responsibility

to explain to the American people

and to seek authorization from this

Congress. Because the President has

failed to do that, because he has failed

to fulfill his obligations, we are here

today.

Now, make no mistake: I support the

removal of the Libyan regime. I support

the President’s authority as Commander

in Chief. But when the President

chooses to challenge the powers of

the Congress, I, as Speaker of this

House, will defend the constitutional

authority of the legislature.

This bill represents, I believe, a reasonable

approach. By allowing our

forces to continue playing a limited

support role, it would not undermine

our NATO partners. It would, however,

prevent the President from carrying

out any further hostilities without

Congress’ approval, and it would exercise

Congress’ constitutional power to

provide some much-needed accountability.

I believe this is a responsible approach,

and I believe this House should

support it.