Mr. Speaker, I thank

the gentleman from Florida for yielding

me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to

play a major role in writing this legislation.

I want to thank my colleague

from New York, the distinguished

chairman of the committee, for introducing

this legislation along with me.

We have reached a very important

time in the region of Kosova. There are

2 million ethnic Albanians living there

under Serb occupation and tyranny. We

saw the extent of that tyranny, as the

chairman mentioned, a couple of weeks

ago when women, children and innocent

people were just wantonly killed

by Serbian police using helicopters and

artillery. It was something that we

ought not to see in the year 1998. It

brought us back to the beginning of

Bosnia and Bosnia, of course, is when

the West did not object strongly

enough and did not take strong measures

early enough that we saw the

tragedy in Bosnia with thousands upon

thousands of people being killed in ethnic

cleansing and genocide. We can see

the same thing happening in Kosova if

the world does not take a strong stand

now.

This resolution, H. Con. Res. 235, is

an attempt by this Congress to take a

strong stand because we know that if

the situation is going to be resolved in

Kosova, it can only be resolved with

the United States taking a very, very

strong stand.

I have been to Kosova a number of

times. I intend to go again either later

this week or later sometime this year.

I think it is very, very important that

the United States stand up strongly for

the rights of people for self-determination

and freedom all over the world.

As chairman of the Albanian Issues

Caucus, we have been talking, I have

been talking about Kosova for many,

many years and saying that a flare up

like this could make Bosnia almost

seem like a tea party, regrettably,

compared to what could happen in

Kosova. When you have 2 million ethnic

Albanians, 90 percent of the population

with no economic rights, with

no political rights, with no human

rights, you are bound to have a flare

up. And for too many years Milosevic,

leader of Serbia, has refused to even

discuss these things with the Albanians

in Kosova. He summarily took away

their autonomy back in 1998. Some people

are now saying let’s go back to autonomy.

Why would the Albanians

want to go back into a situation that

failed 10 years ago, that was summarily

stolen from them 10 years ago. In the

old Yugoslavia you had

counterbalances to the Serbs. You had

the Croats and the Bosnians and the

Macedonians, the Slovenians, and it

was not so dominated by the Serbs.

Today in Serbia or Yugoslavia it is so

Serb-dominated they have not given

any freedoms at all to the Albanian

citizens. Why would the Albanians

want to go back into this situation?

So we have elections scheduled for

later on this week. It is a little bit uncertain

as to whether those elections

will be held, but the people of Kosova

must be allowed to express their desire

in open and free elections. They must

be allowed to elect their leaders and

their parliament, which they did 6

years ago, and then they were not allowed

to meet. So for 6 years there has

not been any meeting of the Albanian

parliament duly elected by the people

of Kosova. This cannot continue. This

must not continue.

What this resolution does is it condemns

Belgrade’s brutal crackdown in

Kosova; again, the killing of innocent

men, women and children. It calls for

the maintenance of the current sanctions

against the Belgrade regime and

consideration of restoring the interwall

of sanctions. If Milosevic does not do

what he is being asked to do, which is

to give basic freedom to people, we

ought to consider slapping new sanctions

on them. This supports the elections

process in Kosova and sending

monitors, and it is very, very important

that we have monitors. It demands

the full implementation of the

education agreement, including at the

university level. Again, Albanians cannot

teach in their language, they cannot

go to schools. It is just impossible.

I want to commend the Albanian students

in Kosova. Their peaceful demonstrations

have shown a tremendous

level of maturity and must be supported

by all freedom loving people

around the world. This resolution also

urges the U.N. Security Council to discuss

Kosova, as well they should. This

is a very, very important international

incident and Kosova ought to be discussed

by the Security Council. It calls

for the return of the OSCE monitors,

which were thrown away by Milosevic,

who will not allow international monitoring.

We need international monitoring

on the ground if we are to prevent

a tragedy in Kosova. It encourages

the expansion of the USIA office.

I was proud to go there 2 years ago, to

Pristina, the capital, and cut the ribbon

for the United States information

office. We ought to expand that office

to show that we as a Nation are engaged,

that the Albanians there know

there is a friend in the United States,

that the Serbs and Belgrade understand

that we have a presence there

where the American flag is flying and

we care very much about what happens

on the ground. And the European

Union has just recommitted to opening

their office in Pristina. They should do

it as soon as possible.

In short, Mr. Speaker, what this resolution

does, H. Con. Res. 235, is simply

reinforce the goals which we hold dear

as Americans; the right of self-determination,

a condemnation of a brutal

crackdown, and saying that the United

States of America stands with the Albanian

citizens of Kosovo because it is

right to stand with them. It is right to

say that they ought to have the freedoms.

It is wrong for them to have no

personal freedoms, to have 80 percent

or more unemployment, to never have

a chance to go to schools. This situation

must end.

And what the Congress is attempting

to do here in a bipartisan fashion is to

say no more brutal crackdowns. This

must be condemned by the world, and

we want to see the right of self-determination.

I would go one step further.

I would implement a no-fly zone and

continue to do different things that we

must have in order to show our solidarity

with the people of Kosovo.

But this resolution, I think, strikes

the right balance at the right time, and

I urge my colleagues to support the

people of Kosovo who are crying out for

our help. We can do this, my colleagues,

by voting unanimously for

H.Con.Res. 235.