Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before the Members

today, one of three African Americans

sent to the United States Congress

10 years ago, the first time in 129

years that Florida sent an African

American to Congress from the great

State of Florida; the scene of the crime

of the 2000 Presidential election, where

thousands of African American votes

were not counted, over 27,000 thrown

out in my district, with the Supreme

Court selecting the President in a 5–4 decision.

Many of my colleagues say that the

President is the only person elected by

all of the people. Did I miss something?

This President was selected by the Supreme

Court, and that fateful decision

was over 600 days ago. Now this President,

who runs our country without a

mandate, has pushed us to the brink of war.

The President is asking Congress to

give him a blank check. I say today to

the President, his account has come

back overdrawn. This blank check

gives him too much power: a blank

check that forces Congress to waive its

constitutional duties to declare war, a

blank check that lets the President declare

war and not consult Congress

until 48 hours after the attack begins.

Let me repeat that, a blank check that

lets the President declare war and not

even consult with Congress until 48

hours after the attack has begun.

Not only has the President given us

an economic deficit, but there is a deficit

in his argument. Why Iraq, and why today?

In the 10 years that I served in Congress,

this is the most serious vote I

will take. I have to say, the resolution

on Iraq the White House drafted is intentionally

misleading. It misleads the

American people, the international

community and, yes, the United States Congress.

This is a sad day, almost as sad as it

was 627 days ago when the Supreme

Court selected George W. Bush as the

President. The White House talks

about dictators, but we have not done

anything to correct what has happened

right here in the United States. It

amazes me that we question other governments

when in our country we did

not have a fair election.

I recently traveled to Russia, China,

and South Korea; and I believe it would

be unfortunate to damage the goodwill

our Nation was receiving after September

11. But there is a song, ‘‘You

are on your own.’’ Mr. Speaker, we are

on our own with this. No one in the

international community is behind us.

I have not seen any information demonstrating

that Iraq poses a threat to

our country any more than it did 10

years ago, and certainly I do not have

reason to believe we should attack unilaterally

without the support of the

U.N. In fact, recent poll numbers suggest

that many Americans do not support

the way that the President is handling

the situation and, indeed, the

way Congress handles the situation.

They think we are spending too much

time talking about Iraq and not discussing

problems like health care, education

and, yes, their pensions.

Many also say they do not want the

United States to act without support

by allies and, by a 2 to 1 margin, do not

want the United States to act before

the U.N. weapons inspectors have had

an opportunity to enter Iraq and conduct

further investigations.

Although the administration is attempting

to convince the American

public otherwise, they have not shown

any evidence of a connection between 9/

11 and Iraq. Iraq’s government is not a

democracy, but neither are many other

countries on the State Department terrorist list.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, it is in the

hands of my colleagues. I do believe

that there is good and evil in the

world, and what we are about to do

here in the next couple of days will tilt

it in a negative direction. I do hope

that I am wrong, but I do believe what

we will do here today will not only affect

our children, but our children’s

children will pay for what we are about to do.

May God have mercy on America,

and God bless America.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution to authorize

the use of military force against Iraq. I stand behind the Commander-in-Chief

and our men and women in uniform

who may be called upon to defend America’s freedom again.

The War Powers Resolution was

passed to ensure that the collective

judgment of both the Congress and the

President will apply before the introduction of our Armed Forces into hostilities.

I want to commend the President for working with Congress on

crafting this critical resolution. Time and time again, Mr. Speaker,

Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime

have refused to comply with the sanctions imposed by the United States and

its international community. In 1990,

Iraq committed an unprovoked act of

aggression and occupation against its

Arab neighbor Kuwait, a peace-loving nation.

After the Gulf War, the Iraqi government continually violated the terms of

the United Nations-sponsored cease-fire agreement. They refused to provide

access to weapons inspectors to investigate suspected weapon production facilities.

Americans and coalition force pilots

have been fired upon thousands of

times while lawfully enforcing the no-

fly zone crafted by the United Nations

Security Council. In 1993, they attempted to assassinate former President Bush.

As we speak here today,

members of al Qaeda are known to be within the borders of Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, history has proven that

Saddam Hussein and his government

cannot be dealt with through diplomatic channels or peaceful means. He

only understands death, destruction

and trampling on the human rights of

others, as evidenced by his treatment

of the Kurdish people in Northern Iraq

and anyone in his government who questions his power.

Some may argue that America is acting as the aggressor and planning a

preemptive strike without justification. To the contrary,

this is anticipatory self-defense against evil

forces and weapons that threaten our national security and peace and stability

throughout the Persian Gulf and the world.

We do not want to see another day

like September 11 ever again in America, or anywhere else on God’s great

Earth. If we do not put an end to Iraq’s

development of its weapons of mass destruction program, the future could be

worse. America must act forcefully and with

great resolve because the costs are too

high. The time has come for America

once again to set the example for the rest of the free world.

Our children and

our grandchildren should not have to

face this threat again. I ask all of my colleagues to vote in favor of this joint resolution.

Mr. Speaker, for years our policy in this country

has been one of containment, of deterrence,

of collective security, of diplomacy. We contained and

we deterred Joseph Stalin and the Soviets for decades.

We have contained and deterred Fidel Castro and the Cubans for 40 years.

We have contained and deterred Communist China in its

expansionist tendencies for 5 decades.

Now this President wants to radically change our decades-old foreign

policy of containment and deterrence

to a policy of first strike. What does

that tell the world? Does it embolden

Russia to attack Georgia to better deal

with Chechnya? Does it set an international precedent for China to go into

Taiwan or deal even more harshly with

Tibet? Does it embolden India or Pakistan, or both, each with

nuclear weapons, from going to war in Kashmir?

The whole point of the Security Council is to prevent member states,

including veto-wielding permanent

members, perhaps especially veto-wielding permanent members,

to pre-vent those member states from launching first strike, unilateral,

unprovoked war. Resolution 678, which authorized the

Gulf War, called explicitly for countries cooperating with the exiled Kuwaiti loyals to create a coalition to use

force. No country, no country in international law, has the unilateral right

to decide Iraq has not complied with

U.N. requirements, let alone what the U.N. response should be.

A couple of weeks ago, three retired

four-star generals testified in the other

body, stating that attacking Iraq without a United Nations’ resolution

supporting military action could limit aid

from allies, would supercharge, in the

general’s words, supercharge recruiting

for al Qaeda and undermine our war on terrorism.

There are too many questions the administration has yet to answer. If we

strike Iraq on our own, what happens

to our campaign against terrorism? Most of our allies in the war on terror

oppose U.N. unilateral action against

Iraq. Will our coalition against terrorism fracture? And if we win a

unilateral war, will we be responsible for

unilaterally rebuilding Iraq?

I am not convinced this administration possesses the political

commitment to reconstruct the damage after

we defeat Saddam Hussein to bring democracy to that country. It will entail

appropriations of hundreds of millions

of dollars a year, year after year after year. Do we have the political will and

the financial commitment to do that in

that country, in that region? Should a

new enemy arise while we are paying

for the campaign against al Qaeda and

the reconstruction of Iraq, will our resources be so overextended that we will

not be able to address this new threat?

This Congress should not authorize

the use of force unless the administration details what it plans to do and

how we will deal with the consequences

of our actions, namely, what will the U.S. role be after military action is

completed? We should set stronger conditions before any military action is permitted.

The President should present to Congress a comprehensive plan that ad-

dresses the full range of issues associated with action against Iraq: a cost

estimate for military action, a cost estimate for reconstruction of Iraq, along

with a proposal for how the U.S. is going to pay for these costs. We are

going more into debt. Will there ever

be a prescription drug benefit? Will we continue to underfund education? Will

the economy continue to falter if we do this war?

We should do an analysis of the impact on the U.S. domestic economy of

the use of resources for military action

and the use of resources for reconstruction of Iraq. We should answer the

questions. We should have a comprehensive plan

for U.S. financial and political commitment to long-term cultural, economic,

and political stabilization in a free Iraq

if the President is going to talk about

Iraq being a model of democracy in the Middle East.

We should have a comprehensive statement that details the extent of

the international support for military operations in Iraq and what effect a

military action against Iraq will mean

for the broader war on terrorism. We should have a comprehensive

analysis of the effect on the stability of Iraq, and the region, of any regime

change in Iraq that may occur as a result of U.S. military action.

And, finally, we should have a commitment that the U.S. will take

necessary efforts to protect the health,

safety, and security of the U.S. Armed

Forces and Iraqi civilians. Mr. Speaker, before we send our

young men and women to war, before

we put our young men and women in harm’s way, we must make certain in

every way that this is the best course of action.