Mr. Speaker, in this body our first and highest responsibility is protecting our homeland, and

that responsibility may from time to

time require us to embrace unpopular

policies and justify them to our constituents when we recognize a transcendent danger to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I realize my vote for

this resolution authorizes a military

action that may put at risk thousands

of American lives in Iraq. However, the

tragedies of September 11 have vividly

highlighted the danger that inaction

may risk tens, if not hundreds of thousands of innocent American lives here

at home from terrorism.

This bipartisan resolution was drafted in recognition of this fact and,

therefore, presents our President with

the initiative in continuing the global war against terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Saddam

Hussein, like Osama bin Laden, hates

America and has called for the murder

of Americans everywhere. We know

that Saddam Hussein even in the face

of crippling economic sanctions has

found the resources to reconstruct his

chemical and biological weapons programs, even at great painful expense to his people.

We know that Saddam Hussein is directing an aggressive program to procure components necessary for building

nuclear devices and that he actively

supports terror in other nations, including Israel. So the question before

us is, do we wait for Saddam Hussein to

become a greater threat, or do we address that threat now?

CIA Director Tenet has told us in re-

cent days that al Qaeda has sought co-

operation from Iraq. I cannot stand

here and trust that Saddam Hussein

will not supply al Qaeda and other terrorist networks with weapons that

could be used to massacre more Americans. On the contrary, we have every

reason to believe that the Iraqi dictator would share his growing arsenal

of terror with agents willing to strike at the United States.

With this in mind, and given other

revelations from captured members of

al Qaeda, it is clear that time is not on

our side. That is why I support this balanced and nuanced resolution pro-

viding our President with the powerful

backing of Congress in an effort to disarm Iraq. It is my sincere hope that

this resolution will stimulate intrusive

and decisive action by the United Nations and at the same time lead to a

full disarmament of Saddam Hussein.

But if it does not, the United States of

America must stand willing to act in

order to prevent more events like those of September 11.