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

and I join the gentleman from California and associate myself with his remarks. I would hope my friend, the

gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON), who I believe is right on this

issue, would refrain from politicizing.

If there is blame to go around, there is

certainly enough blame to go around

here in this town today, yesterday, and even a few days ago.

After careful consideration, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. This vote is the most important

and difficult one I have cast since coming to Congress some 6 years ago. I sincerely hope, as I imagine most of my

colleagues do, that we will never have

to cast another one like it.

I have listened carefully to the concerns and objections of many of my

colleagues and constituents; and having never served in the Armed Forces,

I have sought the counsel of those who

have. I have reviewed the available intelligence about the threat from Iraq

and weighed the risk of a potential

conflict with Iraq in the context of our

ongoing war on terrorism; and I have

reached the conclusion, as many have,

that the risk of inaction and delay far

outweigh the risk of action. Saddam Hussein has stockpiled

chemical and biological weapons, as all

have mentioned today, and is seeking

the means to deliver them, if he does

not already have the capacity now. He

is developing missile delivery systems

that could threaten American citizens,

service members, and our own allies in

the region. But in today’s world, a

sworn enemy of America does not need

a missile to deliver weapons of mass

destruction. All he needs is a suitcase,

a small plane, a cargo ship, or a single suicidal terrorist.

The most compelling case for action,

however, Mr. Speaker, is the nuclear

threat. Let us be clear. We do not have

the intelligence suggesting that an imminent nuclear threat is upon us. I

would urge Secretary Rumsfeld to

cease suggesting to Americans that

there is some connection between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda unless he

has evidence to present to this Congress and to this public.

What we do have evidence of is that

Saddam Hussein continues to desire to

obtain a nuclear weapon. And we know

that should he obtain the raw materials, which may be available to him in

any number of ways, he could build a

nuclear bomb in less than a year. The

Iraqi regime’s efforts to obtain nuclear

weapons are coupled with the recklessness of the Iraqi dictator. We know

that Saddam is capable of murder and

untold cruelty. We know that Saddam

is capable of aggression and also capable of miscalculating his adversary’s

response to his aggression. Weapons of mass destruction in the

hands of a cruel, reckless, and misguided dictator pose a clear and

present danger to our security. I could not vote to authorize military action.

abroad if I did not believe that Saddam

Hussein poses a growing threat to our

security, one that will not recede just

because we hope it goes away. That is

why I support giving the President the

authority to achieve our fundamental

goal: disarming the Iraqi regime of all weapons of mass destruction.

As we consider this resolution, every

Member should read it carefully so we

do not mischaracterize what we are

voting on here today. So what is this

resolution for? First, it is a resolution

stating Congress’ support for our diplomatic efforts. This resolution must not

be taken as an endorsement of unilateralism. It explicitly affirms

Congress’ support for the President’s

efforts to work through the U.N. Security Council to address Iraq’s ‘‘delay,

evasion and noncompliance.’’ It calls

for prompt and decisive action by the

U.N. Security Council to enforce its own mandates on Iraq.

Second, this resolution is not a declaration of war. The resolution forces

the President to affirm that all diplomatic and peaceful means have proven

inadequate to protect our Nation’s security. This gives the President the

flexibility to dangle a stick with that carrot.

At the same time, it affirms that

military action must be used only as a

last resort. If it were up to some of us

in this Congress, we would have done it

another way, perhaps building international support before coming to Congress, but this President chose to do it another way.

Third, the resolution more defines

our purpose in authorizing the use of

force. The use of force has two clearly

defined purposes: one, to defend the national security of the United States

against the continuing threat posed by

Iraq; and, two, to enforce all relevant

United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

Unlike the White House’s draft language, the resolution carefully limits

its authorization to Iraq and only Iraq.

And it is clear that our purpose is to

protect against the threat to the

United States. This resolution authorizes military action to disarm Iraq but

does not mention regime change. The

goal is Iraq’s disarmament and full

compliance with U.N. mandates. I applaud Leader GEPHARDT

and others, including Republicans and Democrats in the Senate, for helping to negotiate such language.

Although I strongly support the

President in addressing the threat from

Iraq, I believe the President must be

more candid with us and the American

people about the long-term commitment that is going to be needed in Iraq.

It has been a year since we began the

campaign in Afghanistan; and our efforts there politically, economically,

and militarily are nowhere close to

concluding. I visited Afghanistan in

February and March and witnessed

firsthand how fragile the peace is

there. It will take years to forge stability in Afghanistan and years in Iraq.

War is the last outcome that I want,

and the last outcome I believe the

President wants; but when America’s

national security is at stake, the world

must know that we are prepared to defend our Nation from tyrants and from

terrorists. With that, I ask every Member of Congress to support this resolution supporting our President and supporting our Nation.